

Section II

Content Review

CHAPTER 3

The Rise of Europe

INTRODUCTION

The following chapters review the content of the AP European History course. You will find that they roughly correspond to the outline of your textbook. However, when warranted, I have added content deemed important to an understanding of the major themes and concepts of the course, particularly related to social and cultural topics. In addition, in the margins of the review are features titled “Heads Up!” and “Sidebar.” Heads Up! comments connect the topic to review strategies and tips. Sidebars highlight topics or issues of special importance, or attempt to clear up common misconceptions and stereotypes. Safe travels on your journey through the exciting ride that is European History since 1450.

A NOTE ON GEOGRAPHY

Before we depart, it is important to know where we are and where we are going. Some claim that “geography is destiny.” Though there is truth in this assertion, it is overstated. As with any geographic region, Europe has been tremendously influenced by its environmental context; economic activities, cultural practices, political forms, and even fashion have all been shaped by geographic and climactic circumstances.

Take note of the map on page 49. Several observations come to mind. First, Europe is an oddly shaped peninsula gouged with numerous inlands, seas, bays, and gulfs; punctuated by islands small and large; and narrowing toward the Atlantic and widening into the great plain leading to the vast Eurasian landmass. Second, Europe’s location from north to south places it in the temperate climate zone—with wide variations between summer and winter temperatures, though this moderates in proximity to large bodies of water, such as the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. Third, a large variety of navigable rivers, mountain ranges, and plateaus indicate the tremendous diversity of landforms in such a small area (Europe is the second smallest of the seven continents).

What has been the impact of this geographic inheritance? For purposes of your course, two observations are offered. First, a wide variety of economic activities has marked the forward advance of European history. Europe’s diverse climate and geography allow it to cultivate almost every important agricultural product—essential cereal grains, livestock, grapes for wine—and employ important natural resources for a wide range of manufacturing and industrial activities—mining, metallurgy, textile production. This geographic inheritance accounts largely for Europe’s economic vitality and its outward reach to control markets and resources abroad, linking geography to the historical developments of exploration and imperialism, the Commercial Revolution, and industrialization.

Second, the European landmass has proved incredibly difficult for one political entity to control. Even the Romans were unable to subjugate all of it, and subsequent conquerors have repeated this failure. As a result, Europe’s political and diplomatic history has been defined by a variety of political forms—nation-states, city-states, republics, empires, contested border regions—and multiple centers of power. Because of the inability of one entity—be it the Holy Roman Empire or Napoleonic France—to control the entire region, frequent warfare and shifts in



the balance of power define European political and diplomatic history. Though much common ground exists among the nations of Europe, until recent memory sufficient differences in language, culture, and history have prevented a strong enough shared identity to overcome conflicts that too often descended into warfare. Thus, we have a major theme of this course linked to the geographic context: the tension between the identities of the individual nations and the common heritage of "Europe."

As you study the content to follow, it is in your interest to keep a vigilant eye on the geographic context for these events and developments. You are advised to refer to the maps within this guide and in your textbook to connect the ever-changing political map of Europe to events that caused these shifts. Moreover, knowing the major regions and nations of Europe will provide a visual cue for grounding you in the historical content to follow. The time spent internalizing the map of Europe will pay off in your understanding and performance on the AP Exam.

THE ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INHERITANCE

Though the Advanced Placement European History Exam covers the period from 1450, some general knowledge of the ancient and medieval world will prove useful in your study of the material. For example, it is difficult to understand the fascination of Renaissance humanists

with classical values if one has little familiarity with ancient Greece and Rome. With that caveat in mind, this brief chapter offers background on the pre-1450 period.

Trends Associated with the Rise of Europe

Prior to 1300, Europe's political power and cultural accomplishments paled in comparison to other major world civilizations. In 1300 the term "Europe" was not even used to describe the present continent. What we now call Europe was more likely referred to as "Christendom." The term "Europe" coincides with the modern age, just as Europe's rise as a major civilization coincides with modernity.

Globalization

As Europe has expanded outward and increased its power relative to other cultural hearths, it has helped spread important developments associated with modern life. Contact between two previous unknown hemispheres in 1492 (and after) initiated a period of globalization. Goods and resources from one area became accessible to all. Globalization marks our present age and involves the cultural and political penetration of previously remote or isolated regions by imperialist powers, multinational corporations, and telecommunications enterprises. Though this phenomenon is not synonymous with the rise of Europe, there is little doubt that European scientific, economic, technological, and political advances have fueled it.

Democratization

For much of Europe's history, elites held real political power. With the advent of the American and French Revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century, the ideals of representative government and guarantees of rights became a standard against which regimes were judged and provided an agenda for revolutionaries everywhere. Liberation movements starting in Europe spawned the first successful slave revolt in Haiti (leading to independence in 1804) and led to independence for Latin America soon after, while nationalism fed the Asian and African drive for self-rule in the twentieth century. Again, democracy is not a purely European concept, but is often stowed away with European colonial rule and culture.

Modernization

We tend to use "modern" as a short-hand term to mean "contemporary" or "up-to-date." Though the term comes into common usage during the Renaissance and leads historians to identify the modern age from about 1500, in fact, modernism is associated with a number of important trends in culture, intellectual life, and politics dating from the eighteenth century. Trends often associated with modernism include:

- A mass political culture based on appeals to popular will (if only indirectly)
- A secular and scientific view of the world
- Cultural movements associated with self-expression, the subconscious, and personal identity
- Economic systems based on mechanization, mass production, and marketing
- Global transportation and communication networks

Common historical terms, such as *ancient*, *medieval*, and *modern*, can be useful in identifying eras and associated trends, but you should not consider them as rigid lines dividing historical eras.

Heritage of the Ancient World

Greek Civilization

The Greeks are often called the founders of Western civilization, with justification. Greek civilization flourished from around 1000 B.C. until its conquest by Rome in 146 B.C., and its contributions in philosophy, science, architecture, drama, history, as well as other fields, became the standard and reference point for European civilization for years to come. There are moments and places whose greatness cannot be explained fully by an analysis of historical circumstances. One such place was Athens in the fifth century B.C. The Greek heritage of human accomplishment echoed through the ages and defined excellence in the following areas:

- *Philosophy*—Greek thinkers used reason in asking the most basic questions of nature and humanity, such as “What is the most real?” “What is the good?” “What is a just society?” Philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle established important principles and knowledge that dominated almost all academic fields until the sixteenth century.
- *Politics*—Though the political arena was restricted to free, property-owning males, democracy, as well as the active civic environment of the Greek city-states, inspired imitation among Renaissance humanists and created a model for future revolutionaries.
- *History*—Historians such as Herodotus and Thucydides emphasized the importance of social and political forces in historical causation. Moving away from mythology and divine explanations, Greek historians wrote history to edify and warn against human pride and stupidity.
- *Drama and Poetry*—Literary works in ancient Greece acted as mirrors held up to society’s faults and the vanities of human nature. The tragedies of Aeschylus, Euripides, and Sophocles and the comedies of Aristophanes influenced later literature in their complex plots, rich characters, and thematic emphasis. Europe’s great tradition of lyric poetry got its start with the ancient poets Pindar and Sappho.
- *Science and Mathematics*—Once again, Aristotle’s ideas—wrong as they often were—defined the fields of physics, astronomy, zoology, and anatomy for centuries, later becoming the target of criticism during the Scientific Revolution. Borrowing much from surrounding civilizations, the Greeks contributed immensely to mathematics, particularly geometry, with the theorems of Pythagoras and Euclid.
- *Classical Aesthetics*—Perhaps the most lasting impact of Greek culture remains its emphasis in art and architecture on the virtues of balance, symmetry, and order. Whether the sculptural attention to the human form or the harmony of a great civic building, how Europeans ordered space and perceived human potential owes much to ancient Greek accomplishments.

Alexander the Great and the Hellenistic Age

Like all good things, ancient Greek civilization came to an end. The devastating Peloponnesian War between the Athenians and Spartans weakened the city-states, opening the way for conquest by the Macedonians from the north. Alexander the Great’s armies swept through southeastern Europe, into the Middle East, and eventually halted near India. Alexander died in 323 B.C., but not before spreading Greek civilization to the areas he conquered. The subsequent two centuries witnessed the gradual synthesis of Greek ideas with those of surrounding regions. This period is known as the Hellenistic Age.

Sidebar: The Balkan Peninsula lies in the southeast corner of Europe and stands as one of the most linguistically and ethnically diverse regions in the world. As a result, it has often been the meeting point of major civilizations, producing warfare and ethnic violence. World War I began in the Balkans, and the region remains a source of tension to this day.

Roman Civilization

Rome began as a city in 753 B.C. and graduated into a far-flung empire ruling the entire Mediterranean basin by the second century A.D. This process did not involve a predetermined path, and was aided by luck, circumstance, and sheer determination. Certainly, the Romans deserve recognition for their contributions to many fields and the length of their rule, yet their initial importance lay in spreading Greek ideas to the remainder of Europe following the Roman conquest of the Balkan Peninsula in 146 B.C. With each conquest, Rome successfully integrated new ethnic groups and peoples into its realm, often by extending citizenship and conferring the benefits of Roman civilization upon those lands. While Rome built on Greek learning in many areas, its greatness tends to rest upon its practical accomplishments and enduring legacy.

- *Administration and Law*—As a republic, Rome survived by constantly adapting to shifting circumstances and making use of the patriotism it inspired in its citizens, whether fighting tenaciously in battle or drawing new citizens into its active political life. Internal social and political conflict, along with the rise of military despots, ultimately undid the republic and led to the creation of the empire. The empire's ability to centralize power and establish a uniform legal code across a vast expanse of territory became the touchstone and goal of many European rulers since the empire's fall in 476 A.D. (in the west; the eastern or Byzantine Empire continued until 1453).
- *Architecture and Infrastructure*—Rome thrived as a distinctly urban culture. Wherever Romans conquered, they brought roads, aqueducts, impressive public buildings, and other amenities previously unknown to their new subjects. Though much of this infrastructure eventually decayed owing to disrepair, even the ruins served as a legacy to be imitated. For example, Renaissance humanists scoured their Italian backyard searching for examples of Roman architecture, baths, and piazzas, not to mention sculptures and literary works for artistic imitation.
- *The Pax Romana*—During its almost half-millennium rule, the Roman Empire generally succeeded in providing a political order that allowed both an active public life and a thriving intellectual and cultural setting. Certainly the empire experienced turmoil—especially in the third century—due to barbarian invasions, military interference, and demographic decline, but resiliently rode further on the fumes of its nearly exhausted glory. Even after it fell, many looked to recover the peace and stability of the *Pax Romana*, or Roman peace.

Christianity

Though Christianity did not originate there, Europe has traditionally been the heartland of the Christian religion. After the fourth century, when it became the official religion of the Roman Empire, Christianity spread outward from the Mediterranean basin, reaching its final missionary outpost in the Eastern Baltic in the fourteenth century. Christianity's influence extends beyond the religious realm, into politics, ideas, culture, and the arts. Oftentimes, Christian dogma was reconciled and absorbed into pagan customs and beliefs, as can be seen with holiday practices during Halloween and Christmas. Nonetheless, the implications of Christian theology and practice held profound consequences for European society.

- *The Soul*—Belief in individual immortality and a moral structure that transcended the temporal ("material" or "earthly") world radically altered the perception of the human person.

Christianity holds that there is a spiritual reality, the “soul,” that exists beyond the material world and is accessible only to the senses.

- *Individual Dignity*—The notion that each individual is “created in the image of God” has often acted as a check on absolutist tendencies in politics and provided a moral basis for law and society.
- *Monotheism*—Drawing from their Jewish roots, the Christian fathers of the early Church maintained a strong belief in one God, while at the same time articulating the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or the three persons of God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) who share the same substance.
- *St. Augustine (354–430)*—Perhaps the most influential of the early Christian saints, his writings emphasized the predominance of spiritual over temporal authority, the importance of the next world (the “City of God” vs. the “City of Man”), and the sovereignty and majesty of God.
- *Caesaropapism*—According to the traditions of the Roman Empire, political and spiritual authority were fused in the same person. While this tradition continued in the Eastern or Byzantine Empire, the two authorities developed separately in Latin Christianity. While this split caused repeated controversies between the Roman Catholic papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor during the Middle Ages, its positive effect was to carve out a zone between both authorities for political diversity and corporate (meaning “in groups”) liberties where neither political nor spiritual power could reach, each being checked by the other.

Sidebar: St. Augustine elaborated the idea of predestination and placed great emphasis on faith as a path to salvation, making him the primary inspiration for Martin Luther and other Protestant reformers in the sixteenth century.

Heritage of the Medieval World

The Early Middle Ages, 476–1050

The period following the fall of the Roman Empire is often termed “the Dark Ages.” To some extent, this designation is true, as Roman cities became depopulated, roads fell into disrepair, trade dried up, and various barbarian tribes replaced the universal empire with a variety of Germanic kingdoms. In addition, the learning of ancient Greece and Rome was kept alive dimly by the candlelight of monastic scriptoria.

- *Barbarian Invasions*—Due to a “traffic jam” on the plains of central Asia, barbarian tribes poured into Europe in the waning days of the Roman Empire. Most of these tribes gradually assimilated into the empire, often being used for their military skills or to guard distant outposts. What had originally been a strength of the empire—the ability to assimilate various ethnicities—gradually diluted the culture and greatness of Rome. Thus, in 476 a barbarian leader deposed the last emperor in the West.
- *Latin vs. Greek Christianity*—Once the Roman Empire was divided in the fourth century between east and west for administrative purposes, the two parts drifted further apart culturally and religiously. After the fall of Rome, the Byzantine Empire, centered in Constantinople (today Istanbul) continued the legacy of the empire, but with a distinctly Greek cultural accent. Disputes throughout the medieval period over the authority of the pope, the use of religious icons in church, and other theological controversies led to a formal break between the Latin (Catholic) and Orthodox branches of Christianity that was formalized in 1054, and remains to this day.

Sidebar: Islam is the fastest growing religion in Europe today. Though many nations remain Christian in name, religious observance among European Christians has declined significantly in the past half-century. This shift has fueled concerns over the religious balance of power and has led to political parties geared toward restricting further immigration.

- *The Islamic World*—Islam came out of the desert in the 620s as the fastest growing religion in world history, quickly establishing political and cultural dominance of vast swaths of Asia, North Africa, and southern Europe. Arabs easily assimilated the intellectual legacy of the Greeks and Roman—keeping alive the learning of Aristotle and others more effectively than Europeans—at the same time making important contributions to mathematics (Arabic numerals, algebra), science (especially in astronomy and medicine), and literature. Since the early eighth century, Muslims have been a continuous presence in Europe, claiming a common religious heritage with Jews and Christians as “people of the Book,” though believing Mohammad and the Koran to be the ultimate fulfillment of God’s promise to His people.

- *Germanic Customs*—Unlike the Roman Empire, barbarian culture focused on loyalty to persons rather than institutions. Rather than adhering to abstract legal concepts or ideals, Germanic society re-

olved around tribal identities, which allowed in many ways for a greater amount of freedom than had existed in the Roman Empire. However, this freedom came at the cost of political unity, economic vitality, and an active civic culture.

- *Monasteries*—Monasteries acted as more than houses for religious orders. Beginning in the fifth century when they adopted the discipline of St. Benedict (c. 480–543), monasteries retreated from the chaos of political life to concentrate on the life of the spirit and the mind. This meant that monks kept alive ancient Greek and Roman texts, at the same time inventing—everything from champagne to pretzels.
- *Charlemagne*—A Frankish king (from the tribe of the Franks, later France), Charlemagne, provided a short-lived period of unity and intellectual revival in central Europe. Crowned emperor by the pope in 800, Charlemagne drove out rival barbarian chieftains and established a seat of government in Aix-la-Chapelle (Aachen in German) in imitation of the Roman ideal. Though he could not himself read, Charlemagne led a mini-Renaissance of learning, which faded when his successors fought among themselves over the political spoils after his death in 814.
- *Second Wave of Invasions (Ninth Century)*—Following the rule of Charlemagne, Europe once again was beset by a period of instability and foreign invasion. During the ninth century, tribes from the north, east, and Muslim pirates from the south threatened to overrun the weak kingdoms of the European heartland. As before, the Norse from Scandinavia and the Magyars from Asia were gradually incorporated into European political culture and converted to Christianity. By 1000, Europe had settled into relative political stability, with the map now filled in with virtually all of the major ethnic groups, though borders would continue to shift and evolve according to war, conquest, and migration.

The High Middle Ages, 1050–1300

As a historical era, the Middle Ages gets a bad rap, whether being spoofed by Monty Python or being associated with terms such as “Dark Ages” or “gothic.” A more appropriate way to view this millennium is as a gradual synthesis of the major strands of European culture, politics, and society—ancient Greek and Roman, Christianity, and barbarian. In fact, the High Middle Ages was a period of dynamic developments in ideas, economics, technology, politics, and society. Simply because medieval life looks different to our contemporary eyes doesn’t mean it was backward or uncivilized. Perhaps the brief review that follows will convince the skeptic of this validity.

- *Agriculture*—Improvements in agriculture, such as three-crop field rotation, the iron plow, horse collar, and use of windmills, supported an increasing population. More land was brought under cultivation, in places producing a surplus, which helped to stimulate an increase in trade. By 1300, Europe had reached an all-time (up to then) population high of 75 million, which represented a doubling from the level of 1000.
 - *Feudalism*—Based on the decentralized nature of Germanic political culture and the insecurity of the Early Middle Ages, the system of feudalism emerged during the High Middle Ages. Relationships between lord and vassal were based on specific contractual obligations of loyalty and protection. In return for protection, peasants provided labor and gave loyalty to feudal elites, who controlled peasants and serfs through an intricate set of obligations, fees, rituals, and taxes. As warfare required continuous training and expensive equipment (a result of the invention of the stirrup allowing heavy mounted warriors), only an elite few could engage in the practice. Society became divided, at least in theory, into those who fought (nobles and knights), those who prayed (the clergy), and those who worked (peasants and artisans).
 - *Towns and Commerce*—As the economy improved throughout the High Middle Ages, its effects were felt most strongly in the growth of towns. Medieval towns were not the teeming urban centers of the industrial era, but did act as magnets for skilled labor, ideas, and goods. Towns lay outside the feudal structure and jealously guarded their liberties, which were generally confirmed by charters. Towns often banded together in leagues to protect their independence or promote their commerce, as with the Hanse, the German trading centers in the Baltic. A central institution of most towns was the guild, which controlled the production of goods in a particular craft. Not only did the guild ensure a minimum quality of goods and license its members' skills, it also acted as a civic institution, reflecting the corporate (small, organized groups) nature of medieval society. With the continued growth and attraction of cities in western Europe, feudalism, especially serfdom, declined in importance, to be replaced by a more commercial and money-oriented economy.
- Sidebar:** One might make a convincing case that the thirteenth century was the greatest of all centuries, with universities founded, innovative cathedrals built, a revival of commerce, technological breakthroughs (clocks, compass, gunpowder, glasses, etc.), Scholasticism, and the Magna Carta. Yes, the Middle Ages was less tolerant than our present age; however, recall that the recent twentieth century stands by far as the most destructive age in human history.
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- *National Monarchies*—The states of the Middle Ages lacked the complexity and administrative tools of more modern forms of government. Nonetheless, kings and queens of this era worked diligently to establish hereditary claims to their thrones. In fact, the beginnings of bureaucracy (government agencies) and representative government can be seen in several nations. First, monarchies established some power to tax their subjects to support the state, though this often required the approval of other bodies. A well-known example demonstrating the trend is the English nobles limiting the power of the king in 1215 with the Magna Carta, which eventually led to the formation of the Parliament. Royal councils and representative bodies confirmed limits on the power of monarchs and mandated that traditional liberties must be respected.
 - *The Church*—During this period, the Catholic Church reached the height of its political, spiritual, and cultural influence. Throughout the High Middle Ages, the pope and the Holy Roman Emperor continuously vied for power in central Europe, generally over the issue of clerical control, with the result that each checked the power of the other. For a time, popes were successful in establishing their claims to make and unmake kings. The climax

of these grand ideals came with the papacy of Innocent III (1198–1216), who attempted to unify the entire Christian world under his authority. At the same time, there was growing criticism of the behavior of the clergy and the lack of regularity in church doctrine and practice. The result was a revival of the monastic ideal (termed the Cluniac movement) and the calling of an exceptional Church council in 1215—the Fourth Lateran—that established new regulations for the clergy and formalized many church doctrines related to the sacraments, which stand to this day.

- *Gender Roles*—As with many periods in history, women’s roles in the Middle Ages were bound by legal and economic prescription. However, medieval women of different classes often found ways to express autonomy, initiative, and talent within these parameters. The nature of medieval warfare often left noblewomen to manage large manors, engage in politics, and organize the defense of castles. Younger noblewomen often joined convents, where they could pursue intellectual and spiritual interests outside the control of men. Women also played major roles in movements of religious change or in so-called heresies. Further, the ideal of courtly love and chivalry placed women at the center of an important cultural tradition. Cities and towns relied on the labor of women in artisan families, often as guild members in food preparation, brewing, and cloth production. Peasant and serf women labored alongside their husbands in mowing hay, tending to vegetable gardens, or in harvesting. Since peasant homes were simple, domestic chores actually played more of a minor role for women.

Sidebar: Much of the Renaissance was directed against what was perceived as the Scholastics’ focus on stale logic and impractical learning.

- *Universities and Scholasticism*—With the rise of towns came a quickening of intellectual life. Informal meetings of students and teachers evolved into the formal founding of the first universities in the early thirteenth century. Universities taught a variety of subjects in their various faculties, but our current separation of spiritual and material subjects did not exist in the medieval worldview. In fact, theology stood as the “queen of the sciences,” and liberally borrowed from other disciplines to elaborate its truths. The best example

of this practice was the creation of Scholasticism. During the thirteenth century, a mini-Renaissance, or revival, of Aristotle’s philosophy took place. Pagan ideas governing logic and the natural world were synthesized into Christian dogma, especially by scholars such as St. Thomas Aquinas, to explain divine truths. This intellectual system came to dominate the universities until well into the eighteenth century, though with growing criticism after 1500.

- *The Crusades*—A sign of the increasing power of Europe was the Crusades. Due to the expansion of commerce, population, and political organization, Christian Europe was able to go on the offensive against Islamic rule of the Holy Land. The first crusade was launched in 1095, and subsequent efforts succeeded in establishing kingdoms in Palestine and surrounding areas. However, many of these efforts were driven by prejudice (against Jews, for example) and sheer bloodlust, often producing atrocities and tragic consequences, like the needless sack of Constantinople in 1204 (during the Fourth Crusade). Despite some of the baser motives, the Crusades demonstrated Europe’s newfound assertiveness and interest in the outside world, stimulating a spirit of exploration.

Expanding Europe

As of 1300, Europe had become one of several important civilizations on the Eurasian landmass and Africa that came into increasing contact with one another. By this time, Europe stood in a much more advantageous position than it had only a century earlier, able to withstand the onslaught of the Mongols and Ottoman Turks in upcoming centuries. Despite its successes, Eu-

Europe's technological and cultural accomplishments still paled in comparison to China's, yet in the next 600 years it was Europe that successfully projected its power abroad, not China. Why? Though it invented printing and gunpowder, China did not exploit these technologies in pursuit of global commerce and power. Ironically, Europe's lack of central political power, separation of secular and religious authority, and disorderly conflict among various nations (none of which existed in China) acted as the engine that fed technological and scientific innovation, yielding a strange mix of conflict and war along with freedom and dynamism.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Bridenthal, Renate et al., *Becoming Visible*—Valuable collection of essays on women's history from ancient times to the present.

Cantor, Norman, *The Civilization of the Middle Ages* (rev. 1993)—Straightforward and helpful review of all things medieval.

Diamond, Jared, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (1997)—An impressive work arguing for the importance of environmental factors in explaining the rise of Europe.

Grant, Michael, *The Founders of the Western World: A History of Greece and Rome* (1990)—A popular writer surveys the topic in an accessible manner for students.

Hart, Michael, *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*, 2nd ed. (1992)—The title gives the book's premise, and this volume is always good for sparking interesting debates. Many figures covered in the course can be found here.

Riley Smith, Jonathan, *The Crusades: A Short History* (1987)—A good place to start for an understanding of this fascinating and tragic era.

Times Atlas of European History (1994)—Clean maps and brief text take the reader through a tour of European history.

CHAPTER 4

The Renaissance and Reformation

Note: Many terms in these review chapters have been bolded to draw your attention to their importance. Before an exam, you may find it useful to scan down the page for these terms as a final review.

If the High Middle Ages represented dynamic growth, then the fourteenth century acted as the stick in the spokes of this runaway medieval cart that brought it crashing to the ground. Sometimes, however, tragedy can pave the way for the emergence of new cultural trends. In the wake of social, religious, cultural, and economic crisis, there emerged two defining movements of early modern European history—the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation.

THE UPHEAVALS OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

Sidebar: Large areas of eastern Europe were relatively unaffected by the Black Death, which ironically spared the feudal system there. Serfdom and the manorial system continued to define a major difference between east and west.

Europe's peak population of 75 million in 1300 was already pushing up against its natural boundaries when the continent was hit by the **Great Famine of 1315–1317** and the cataclysmic **Black Death** of 1348–1351. The latter represents perhaps the greatest natural disaster in world history, costing Europe upwards of 40 percent of its people. More important than sheer numbers was perhaps the psychological and social cost of the disease. Caused by fleas traveling on rats, the bubonic plague spread quickly along trade routes and especially devastated urban areas. No one could explain the cause of the pestilence. **Flagellants** took the calamity to be God's wrath upon man and whipped themselves in atonement. Many blamed

Jews for poisoning wells, which led to a notorious persecution of that minority in Nuremberg. Art reflected the obsession with death; paintings featured skeletons performing the *danse macabre*. The Catholic Church could offer little solace, especially since the disease killed off well over 60 percent of the top clergy. Perhaps most significantly, the Black Death caused a labor shortage that undermined the feudal structure, as peasants bargained for improved labor conditions, winning lifetime tenures and converting other obligations to cash payments.

Improved peasant conditions did not last long. Governments and nobles reasserted their power throughout the century, which led to the *jacquerie* rebellion in 1358 in France and Wat Tyler's revolt in 1381 in England. Urban revolts also occurred in Florence; each of these revolts was eventually overturned, often with great violence. Of more lasting import was the blow delivered to the feudal system in the west.

National monarchies were young creations, and therefore fragile. Dynastic instability (e.g., the inability to produce male heirs) plagued many states throughout the fourteenth century and led most seriously to the **Hundred Years' War** (1337–1453). Really a series of wars, this conflict between France and England over the French throne (and the cloth trade in the Low Countries) also dealt a fatal blow to the medieval idea of warfare. Time and again, English longbowmen demonstrated the power of massed infantry against France's heavily mounted feudal knights. French fortunes revived upon the back of a divinely inspired peasant girl. In 1429, **Joan of Arc** believed the voice of God called her to break the siege of Orleans. Despite her success, Joan was tried for witchcraft and burned at the stake (later made a saint in 1920). Yet the tide had turned, and by 1453, England held only the city of Calais on the continent. Each nation then turned inward to resolve pressing political conflicts.