

Renaissance

Exploring Worldview
isolation → intercultural contact → change

Ch. 1 Times of Change

Times of Change

A Changing Society: *How are people's attitudes and values shaped by the way that a society is organized?*

What does the word *Renaissance* mean?

Meaning of Renaissance

The word *renaissance* means *rebirth* or *reawakening*.

- *A period in Europe from the 14th to 17th Century*

Therefore, 1300 - 1600 AD

- *Started as cultural movement in Italy and later spread to the rest of Europe, marking the beginning of the Early Modern Age*
- *The cultural bridge between the **Middle Ages** and **modern history***



THE RENAISSANCE

The Renaissance has had an enormous effect on YOUR daily life today. The lasting changes from the Renaissance are still very evident in our society **today**.

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One of the biggest revolutionary ideas of the Renaissance was the concept, or idea, of **humanism**. **Humanism** centres on humans and their values, capacities, and worth (meaning what a person CAN do and accomplish). **This was a HUGE change from the medieval view of the individual as a person born into their class that could never advance**, often oppressed by those with power. In the Renaissance, people began to explore, think, learn, and do to better their lives and advance in society.

Think about this:

- Why do you go to school?
What is the purpose of schooling in our worldview/society?

-Why do we get married?
Why did people used to get married in the olden days (think of princesses, castles, etc) ?

The Middle Ages

- Feudalism
- Hierarchy
- The Black Death
- Church held power



The Middle Ages

- Sometimes called the **Dark Ages** because no big advancements happened until near the end of the Middle Ages. It was constantly riddled with war and war disease. (Think of it as a dark period in history).
- Big advancements and discoveries started to happen at the end of the Middle Ages that overlapped with the Renaissance
 - The beginning of trade with Muslim nations
 - The beginning of scientific discoveries

INNING WHEEL

VOYAGES FOR TRADE AND EXPLORATION

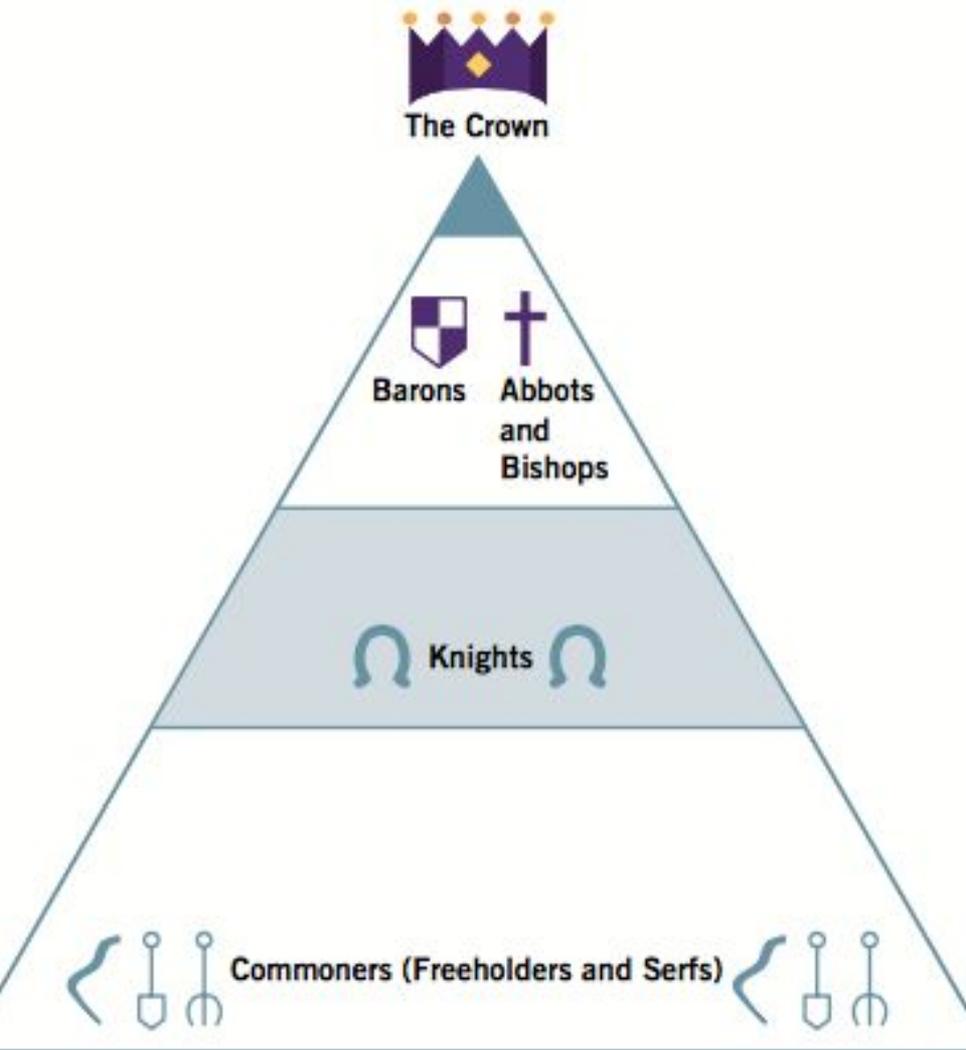


Feudalism

System of political organization during the Middle Ages. Lord owns all land, and others serve him.

Feudalism was a **hierarchy** where people were ranked one above another, according to their importance.

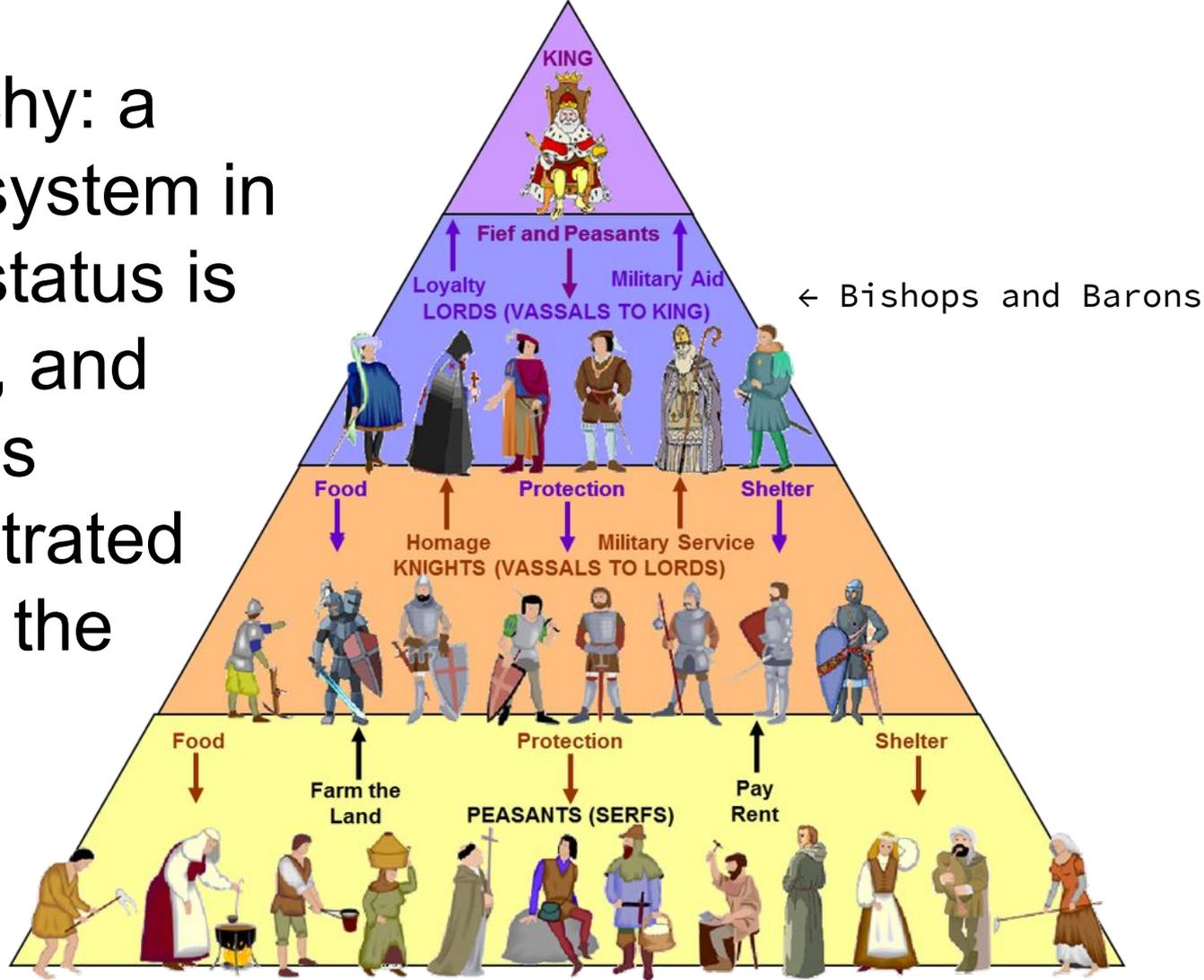
People were **born** into a level of feudal society to stay at for their entire lives. You could NOT advance.



The Feudalism Hierarchy

The nobility and clergy held all the land power in feudal society, yet they made up only about 10% of the population.

Hierarchy: a social system in which status is ranked, and power is concentrated around the higher ranks.



Feudalism Hierarchy

- **Feudalism was based on land, loyalty, and duty.**
- Nobles swore oaths of **allegiance** (loyalty) to the king. They promised to fight for him in exchange for the rights of pieces of land called **manors** or feifs.
- **Bishops** had as much power as Barons. Bishops would receive land from the Crown and over time, the Church became a very large landowner.
 - Do you think this gave the Church a lot of power? Why or why not?

Feudalism Hierarchy

Knights - Knights were medieval gentleman-soldiers, usually high-born, raised by a sovereign to privileged military status after training as a page and squire. Originally knights were attendants or specialized foot-soldiers, but the status of knights was elevated around 800 A.D.

Kings or lords would raise a soldier to a knight by lightly striking (dubbing) the knight's shoulder with the flat of his sword. The knight was given a sword, a pay raise and, frequently, a plot of land. Most knights were required to be at least 21 years old.



Interesting Facts about Knights

- Knights often fought for the rights to pillage. They could become quite rich with the loot they gained from ransacking a city or town.
- By the end of the Middle Ages, many knights paid the king money instead of fighting. Then the king would use that money to pay soldiers to fight. This payment was called shield money.
- The word "knight" comes from an Old English word meaning "servant".
- Today, knighthoods are awarded by kings and queens to people for their achievements. It is considered an honor. Famous people who have been knighted in recent years include U.S. President Ronald Reagan, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, Singer Paul McCartney of the Beatles, and movie director Alfred Hitchcock.

Peasants- Medieval Country Life

- Most people in the Middle Ages were peasants who lived in rural villages on a manor.
- A manor is an estate of land granted by a king or queen to a noble subject. A manor house could be built on the land.
- The peasants were **illiterate** and **uneducated** and the manor was usually the limit of their life experience.

Peasants- Medieval Country Life

- Some peasants were **freemen**, who rented land from the lord or worked for pay.
- Most peasants however, were **serfs**, who were not allowed to leave the manor without the lord's permission. When they did travel, they rarely went farther than the nearest town.

Peasants- Medieval Country Life

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- Peasants were assigned **strips of land** to plant and harvest, each family had their own strip and they worked cooperatively with others on plowing and haying.
 - In exchange for the use of the land, the peasants had to **turn over** to the noble, or “lord of the manor,” a **portion of what the produced.**
 - They were also expected to build roads, clear forests, and do any other work the lord ordered.

Bishops

- Had as much power as Barons (Noble)
- Received their land from the Crown
- Eventually became very large landowners
- The Church was very important to people in their practical and spiritual lives

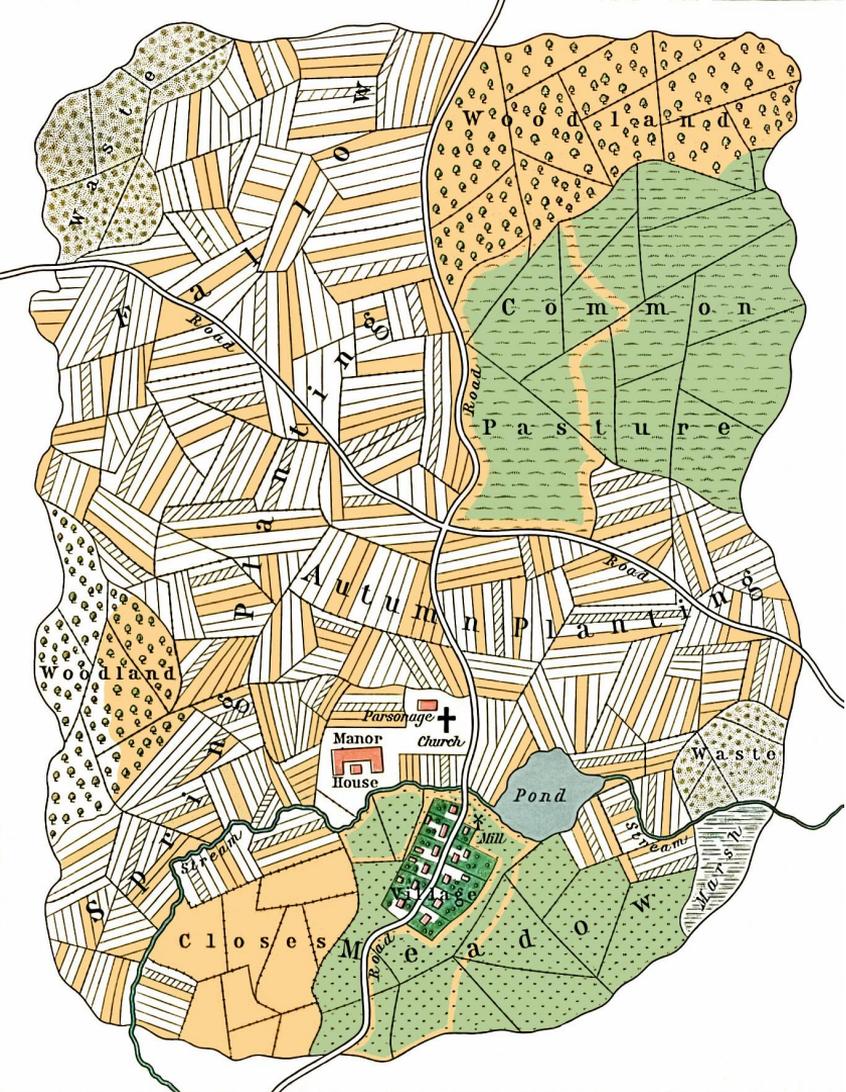
Rights & Responsibilities

Think - Pair - Share

What was a right
and responsibility
of each group?

- Crown
- Nobles/Knights
- Freemen
- Serfs





This image shows a village and the strips of land owned by the peasants.

Different coloured strips signify whether they were for the noble, priest, or the peasant.

The village is the small dark green area.

Where are the manor house and church located? What does this suggest to you?

Town Life

- Most medieval towns were centres for farm communities
- Generally close to a castle, palace, or monastery (a building or buildings occupied by a community of monks living under religious vows.)
- Citizens would build stone walls around the town to protect themselves from rival cities or lords.
- The towns were crowded, dirty, rat-infested place, but they offered freedom and new opportunities.
- People had freedom to do as they wished, marry whom they pleased, and make money as they could.
- According to the law, runaway serfs could gain their freedom by staying in town for a year and a day without being discovered!

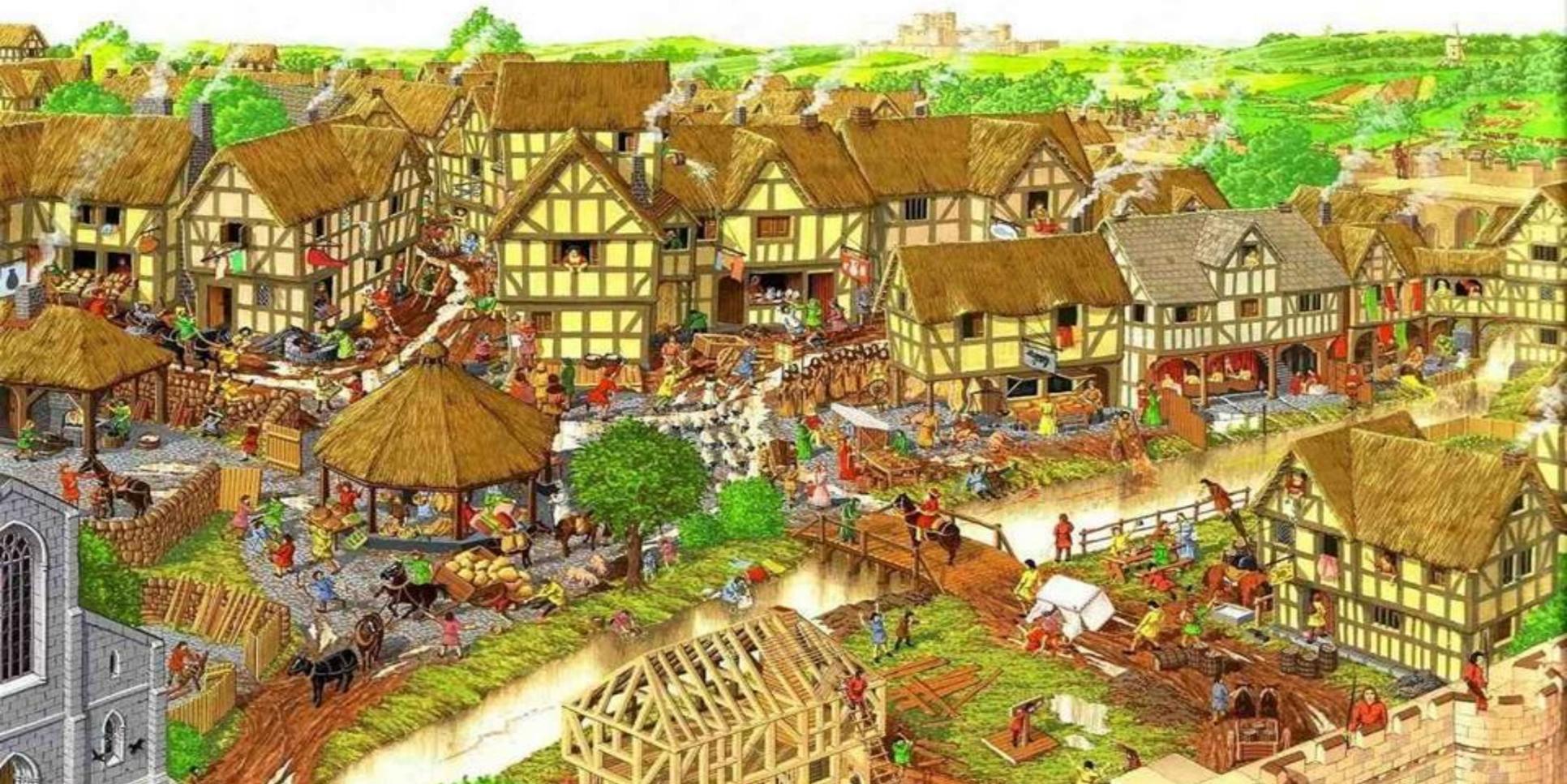


Town Life

- Local goods and goods from other countries were available in shops.
- A peasant who was good at making shoes could open a workshop and sell their shoes.
- Unskilled peasants could learn trades, while others could work for wealthy merchants as servants and labourers.
- Production of goods and trade in town was organized by **guilds**, who controlled the prices of goods, set quality standards, and decided who could be an apprentice. They also took care of members and their families in case of illness or accident.

- Children as young as 8/9 went to live and work at the home of a master and learn a trade.
- After years of working and training they would take a test to become a **journeyman** and be admitted to the guild.
- Years later and after lots of practice and work they would become **masters**. Then they could open up their own businesses and take on their own apprentices.

Discuss: Trades in Canada and the Journeymen certificate.
This concept is still effective and part of our society today!



Think-Pair-Share

What are the main differences between medieval **country life** and **town life**?

Discuss.



FYI

Women typically had several children and shared the hard work alongside men in the fields and town. They had additional housework on top of this. However, women did have the right to inherit property and become masters of a craft. Noble women actually had the fewest rights in medieval society.

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Although the feudal system lasted for hundreds of years, it eventually began to weaken and break down.

Whose interests were best served by feudalism?

What kinds of pressures do you think might have caused feudalism to break down?

- Beginning in 1337, war broke out between England and France. It lasted more than a hundred years and came to be known as “The Hundred Years War”
- Endless fighting devastated the countryside.
- Peasants in both countries revolted because of high rents and taxes they had to pay to finance the war.

Challenges to the Feudal System

1. The Peasants' Revolt

1337 - War broke out between England and France

It lasted more than a century (100 years)!

Known as, "The Hundred Years' War."

Why do you think the peasants revolted in both countries?

High rent and taxes they had to pay to finance the war.

How would have war affected them? Did was benefit peasants?

Both revolts were brutally ended by authorities but the unrest was not resolved.

Feudalism Activity

Feudalism Activity

In groups you will be assigned a role. You cannot change your role, what you have been given is what you get. You cannot advance—you have no hope for anything better. (#sorrynotsorry)

How would each role act towards each other to their face?

How would they walk, approach, communicate?

Reflection

Reflect on this experience: How did your role make you feel?

How does it feel to be “born” into a role you cannot change?

What appears to be the basic needs of all groups in this society? Who provided each of these?

Are these groups dependent on each other? Why?

Why were the oaths necessary? What do you think would happen if someone broke a loyalty oath? Why were they not written and signed?

Challenges to the Feudal System

2. The Black Death

The next blow to the feudal system was the **plague**.

It is estimated that 20 million Europeans died of the Black Death between 1346 and 1350 (only 4 years!!).

Video:

Crash Course: How Dark
Where the Dark Ages,
Really?



Play video until 4:00



The Black Death

Outbreaks of the plague occurred for the next several centuries.

As a result there were labor shortages on the manors and many feudal estates went bankrupt. Why was there a labor shortage?

In the Aftermath of The Black Death

Nobles who were able to hold onto their manors began to rent out their land or sell it to serfs to avoid bankruptcy. This meant that **serfs were finally released from their obligations to the lord.**

Peasants now finally had some options open to them. Most stayed in the security of their work and the community they knew, but some headed to the towns.

What were the biggest changes these two challenges caused?

How did the Black Death affect the Rural Economy?

The Black Death and the Rural Economy

Before the Black Death

Two hundred serfs live and work on the manor. Freeman are sometimes hired, but wages are low.

Expenses

To hire 80 additional workers for 300 days/year at 1 penny/day:

$$80 \times 300 \times 1 = 24\,000 \text{ pennies}$$

Total expenses for one year:
24 000 pennies

After the Black Death

Sixty serfs died in the plague or left to work for higher wages elsewhere. Freeman now demand higher wages.

Expenses

To hire 80 additional workers for 300 days/year at 3 pennies/day:

$$80 \times 300 \times 3 = 72\,000 \text{ pennies}$$

Total expenses for one year:
72 000 pennies

Think/Pair/Share

If over half of the people in Canada suddenly died from a terrible disease, what do you think would happen?

How do you think this would affect our worldview?

Canada's population is around 35 million. Around 20-25 million people died from the Black Plague. Imagine that only Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary remain! Everyone else DEAD!



Black Death Videos

*History Channel Excerpt “The Black Death” 12:56

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kScxc9DPrnY>

Part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFUQCWghjWc> 12:34

Wealth in Society



- As towns grew and life on the manor changes, money came into use more and more because people began to earn it for themselves in town.
- Previously peasants activities were dictated by the rising and setting of the sun, as well as the change of the seasons.
- Time had not been important except to the Church to dictate the time to pray.
- Towns became dependent on time and mechanical clocks were developed. By the early 1300s, mechanical clocks with bells were built.

Wealth in Society

- As people developed their skills in the town, they increased their wealth, too.
- Now, urban people could move up from one social level to the next, **and a new social structure began to emerge.**

Discuss in small groups: What do you think this new social structure was based on? Also, why did time become important?

MONEY!!



What do you notice about this picture?

What do you think is important to these people?

An excerpt from
Marriage at Cana
(1562-1563) by Paolo Veronese

This image is HUGE!
Almost covers a wall!

Wealth in Society

- The power and social position was now based on **money** rather than ownership of land.
- Wealthy merchants and the new middle class were eager to buy the goods in the towns.
- People became more focused on enjoying material possessions and displaying their wealth through the clothing they wore, furniture and decorations in their homes, and meals they served.
- Wealthy people during the Renaissance showed off their status by wearing extravagant clothing.

Wealth in Society

- However, this desire led to an introduction of **sumptuary laws**:
 - Control of how classes could spend their money
 - Basically, a class dress code.

Discuss:

In what ways does a changing social structure affect a society's worldview?

A New Social Structure

Top Level: Aristocracy	Middle Level: Middle Class	Bottom Level: Lower Class
High Church officials	Merchants and business people	Peasants
Rulers or lords of large manors	Craftspeople	Rural labourers
Old noble families	Shopkeepers	Urban labourers
Wealthy merchants	Bankers	Servants
	Priests and lower Church officials	The unemployed

- People's desire for luxury goods like exotic fabrics was one of the factors that led to the expansion of the trade outside Europe. The desire also led to the introduction of **sumptuary laws**.
- **Sumptuary** laws controlled consumption, or how people spent their money. These laws restricted what people of different classes could wear.
- **Is this different from our worldview?**
- **How do you think this affected their worldview?**

A Religious Society - In what ways do religious beliefs
shape a society's worldview?

A Religious Society

What happens today when an epidemic like the Black Death breaks out? We immediately turn to science to solve the problem → medical experts try to keep the disease from spreading and today's communication helps us learn about the epidemic faster to know how to avoid the disease.

But things were very different at the beginning of the Renaissance. No one knew how to treat the Black Death effectively and millions died. Many people think that the plague had been sent by God as a punishment.

A Religious Society

- At this time, religion was a central part of people's daily lives. The worldview of people in Western Europe was shaped by the Christian Church (Catholicism).
- Life in medieval times was hard: sickness, famine, and war were a constant threat. As a result, the hope of a better life after death was very important and people believed that with the help of the Church they would be able to reach heaven after they died.

In what ways do religious beliefs shape a society's worldview?

Think about it through a different lens.

Finish this sentence:

In Canada today, _____ is a central part of people's daily lives.

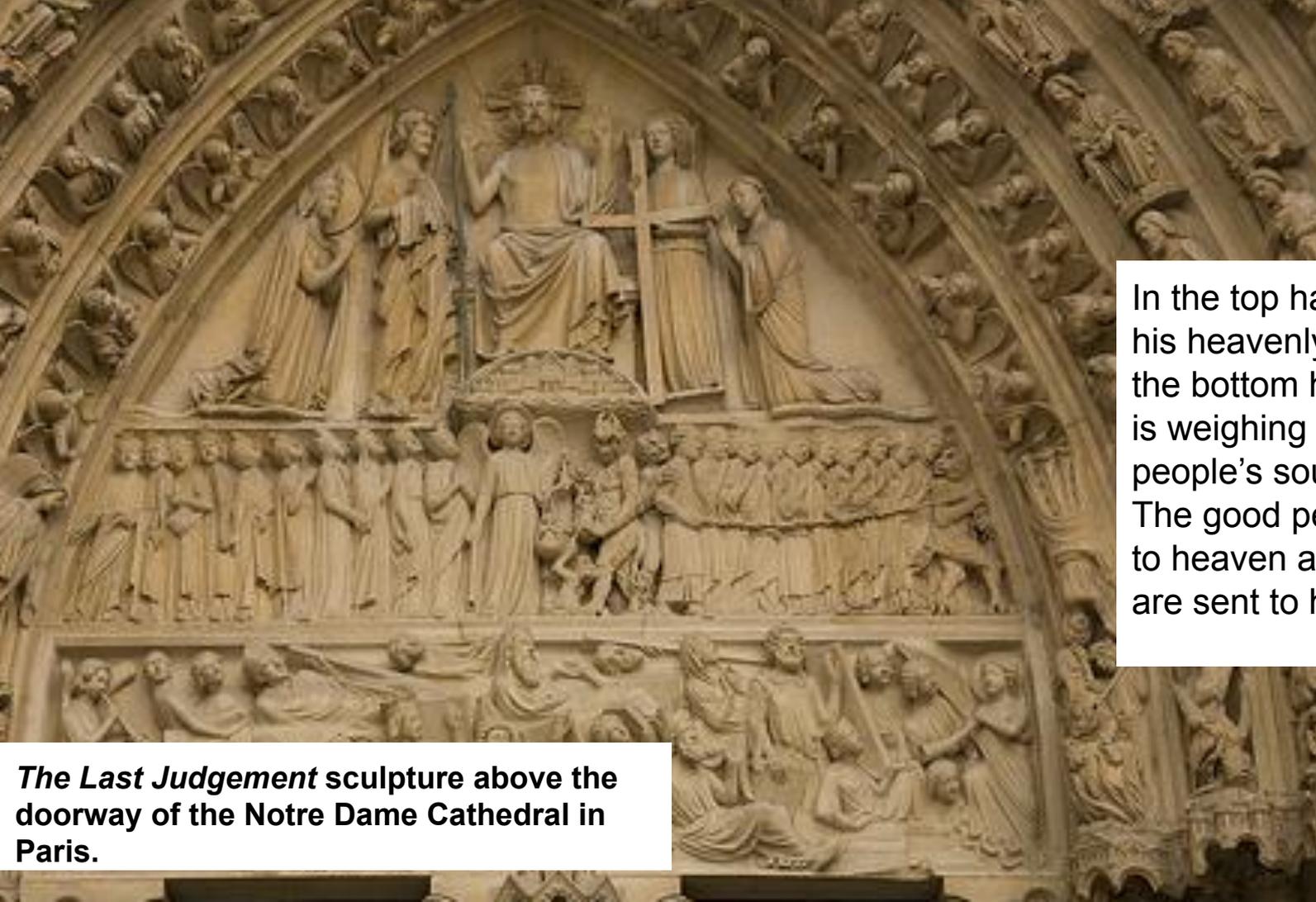
What do your answers suggest about worldviews in society?

- Spirituality is part of everyday life for traditional First Nations, Metis, and Inuit people. Their spirituality is related to the **natural world**.
- Everything has a sacred spirit or presence.
- Inuit hunters traditionally speak to an animal's spirit before they kill it and afterward thank the animal for giving up its life.

In what ways do religious beliefs shape a society's worldview?

How do religions from around the world influence the worldviews of people in OUR times?

Are some societies still more influenced by religion than in others? Explain.



In the top half is Christ on his heavenly throne. In the bottom half, an angel is weighing or judging people's souls on a scale. The good people are sent to heaven and the sinful are sent to hell.

The Last Judgement sculpture above the doorway of the Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris.

The Church

Every group in the Church hierarchy had the duty to be obedient to the group above and to provide services to the group below.

Members of the congregation had the duty to obey the rules of the Church and to pay the priest a **tithe**, a portion of their crops or earnings.

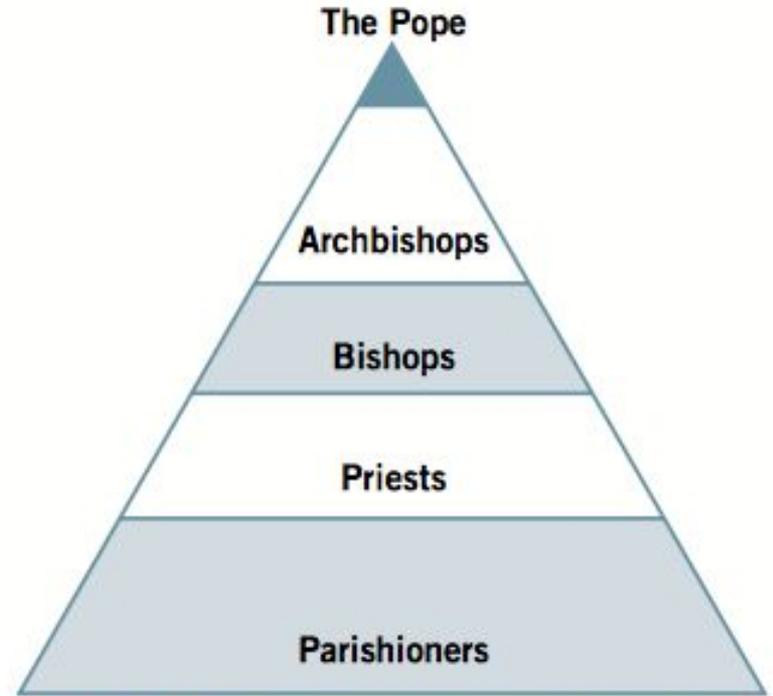


FIGURE 1-16 The Church hierarchy. What similarities can you see between the feudal system and the organization of the Church?



The Middle Ages was a great time of church building. Historians estimate that between the years 900 and 1000, more than 1500 churches were built in France alone! Later, many cathedrals were built all over Europe.

The bishops and citizens took great pride in their local cathedral and often there were competitions to see which city could produce the tallest, most beautiful building!

The people would pour their money AND labour into its construction and 100s of skilled craftspeople such as masons, sculptors, carpenters, blacksmiths, and workers in stained glass were involved.

The heavy work of construction was done by serfs or peasants.

The Top 10 Cathedrals to See



Look at these famous cathedrals built during the Renaissance!

<https://www.lifeofanarchitect.com/ten-cathedrals-to-see-before-you-die/>

10 Cathedrals with a Violent Past

133 Years Later, Gaudí's Cathedral Nears Completion

The fantastical Sagrada Família in Barcelona has entered the final stage of construction.

Construction began in 1882. It is 11 years way from completion.



Monastic Life - Learning, & the Church

- If you were a deeply religious person during the medieval and Renaissance times, you might decide to join a religious order and devote your life to God as a monk (male) or nun (female).
- Many members of religious orders died as a result of caring for victims of the Black Death

Monastic Life - Learning, & the Church

- Unlike most people, monks and nuns were well educated and some monasteries became great centres of learning.
- Eventually, universities grew up around religious schools and taught grammar, geometry, astronomy, and music. Training in religion, law, and medicine was also offered
- By the end of 1400s, there were more than 80,000 universities in Western Europe.
- Women were NOT allowed to attend. (only in 1800s did SOME allow women)

Islams inhabited Cordoba,
Spain.



Jews were integrated within cities and towns of both Islamic and Christian Europe. They were barred from most professions and lived in ghettos.

FYI
Other religions were active in medieval Europe. The major two were Islam and Judaism.

Changing Attitudes Toward Religion

- The Black Death made some people question their faith. They felt that God had abandoned them.
- People also began to take a more critical attitude toward the Church. **Why do you think this was? Discuss.**

Changing Attitudes Toward Religion

- The Church was a wealthy institution; it owned one-third of the land in Europe and rent from ALL property was substantial. (remember: **tithes**) In addition, it received large sums from the estates of wealthy members.
- Like the newly wealthy merchant and middle class, some clergy got caught up in their riches and “the enjoyment of the good life” and some critics say that they were more interested in luxurious living than in spiritual values.

St. Francis of Assisi



A New Age -

What were the main features of the worldview that emerged during the Renaissance?

A NEW AGE

Society was changing! The emergence of busy towns and a merchant class meant that society was becoming less rigid and organized. Worldly pleasures were becoming more important.

A period of great creativity in the arts and sciences was about to begin. In 1855, the French historian Jules Michelet coined the term “Renaissance” to describe what many generations thought of as the rebirth of classical knowledge and learning. This movement began in Italy.

Times of Change

A Changing Society: *How are people's attitudes and values shaped by the way that a society is organized?*

The Expansion of Trade

CHAPTER TWO

The Expansion of Trade

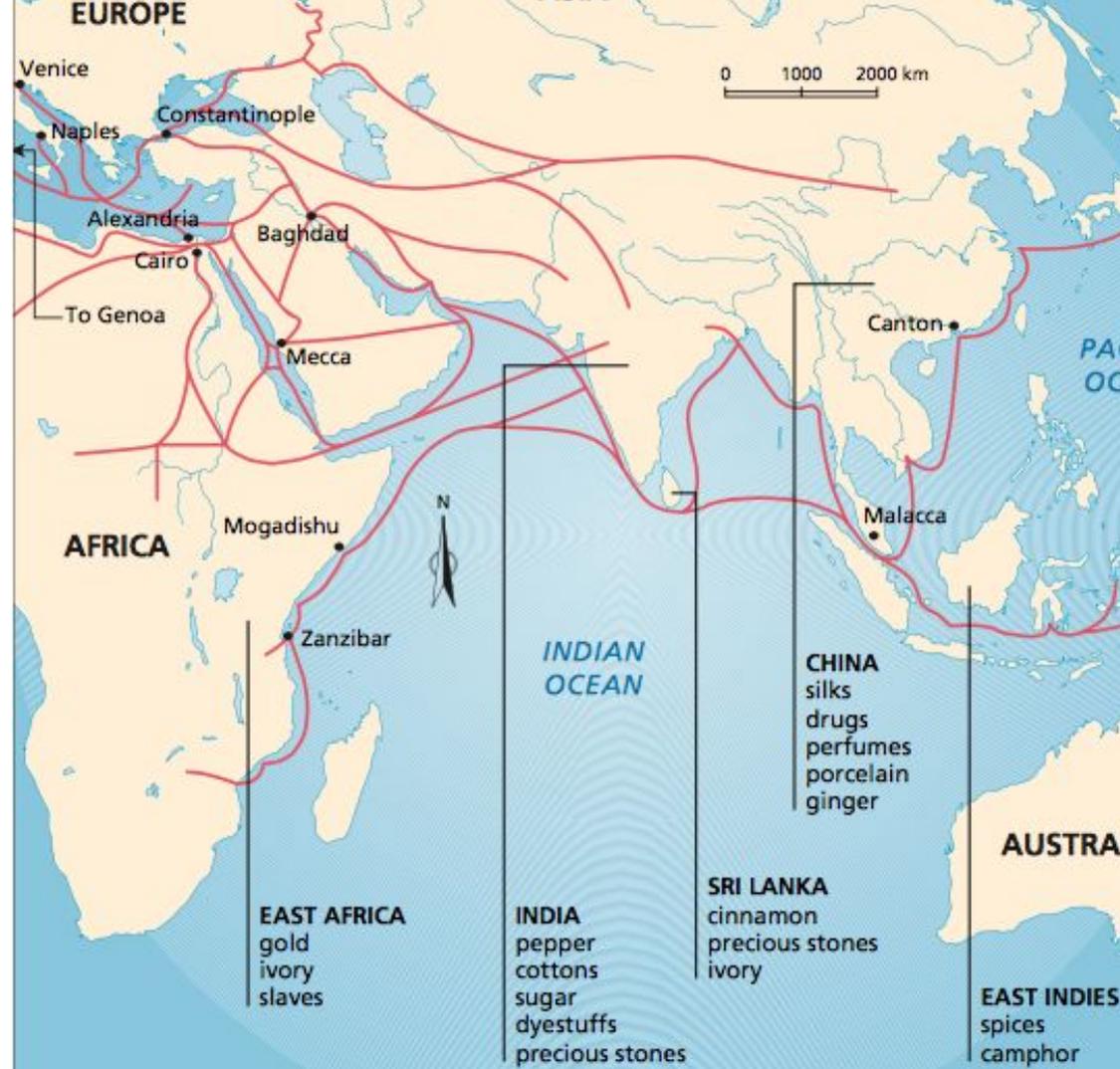
What impact might increased trade and business have on a society's worldview?

What new products do we use as a result of increased global trading with other countries?



The Rise of International Trade

Italy's location has been described as "Europe's gateway to the East." Is this an appropriate metaphor? Explain. What other metaphors would you use to describe Italy's location in terms of trade?



Marco Polo



Imagine you are Marco Polo before you set out on your travels. You are 17 and for the last decade you have been listening to your father and uncle talk about their amazing travels to tropical and mystical places you can only dream of. Now they are planning another trip and they ask you to come along.

What do you say??

Marco Polo - animated

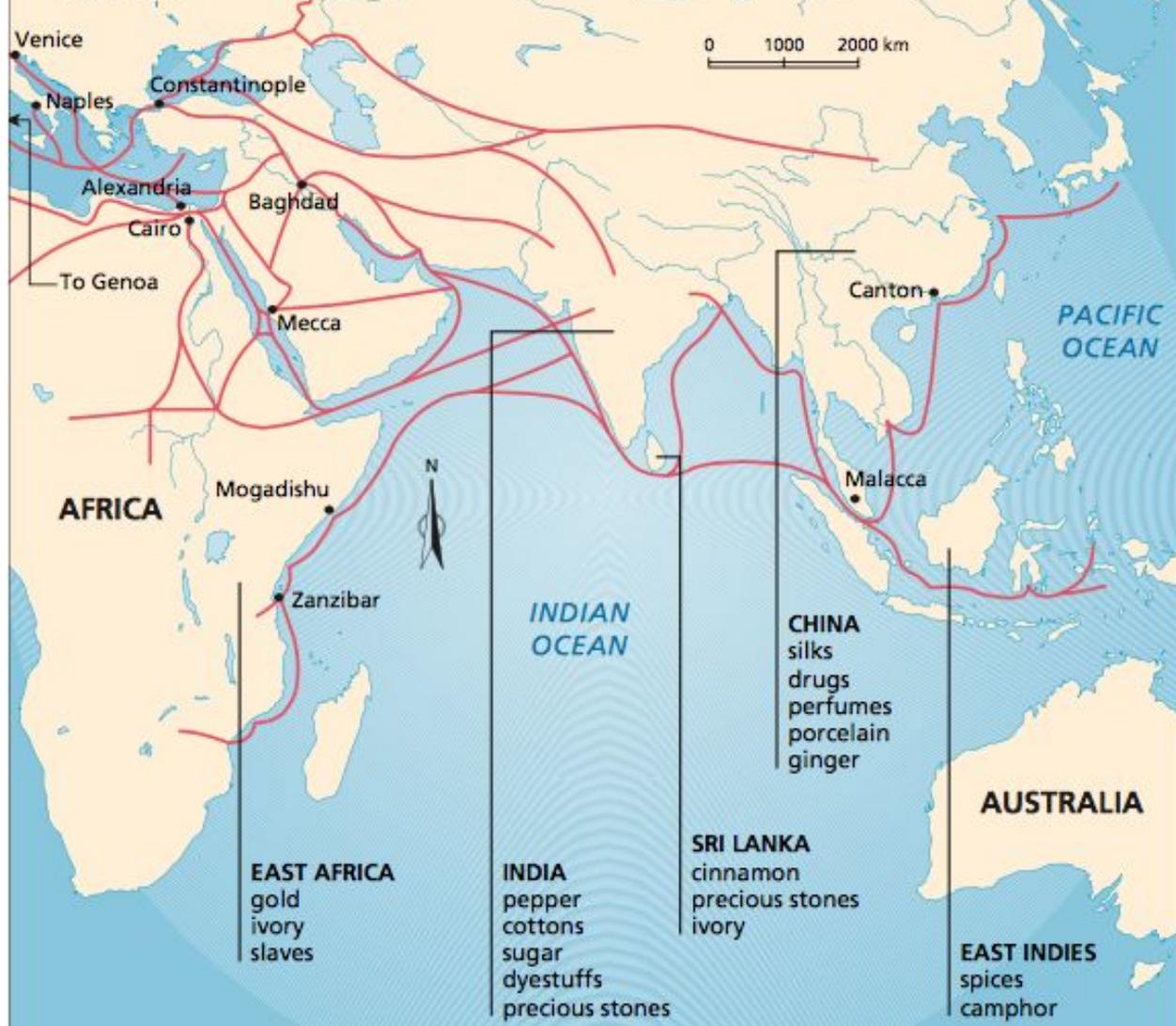
Marco Polo

For much of their journey across Asia, the Polos travelled the **Silk Road**

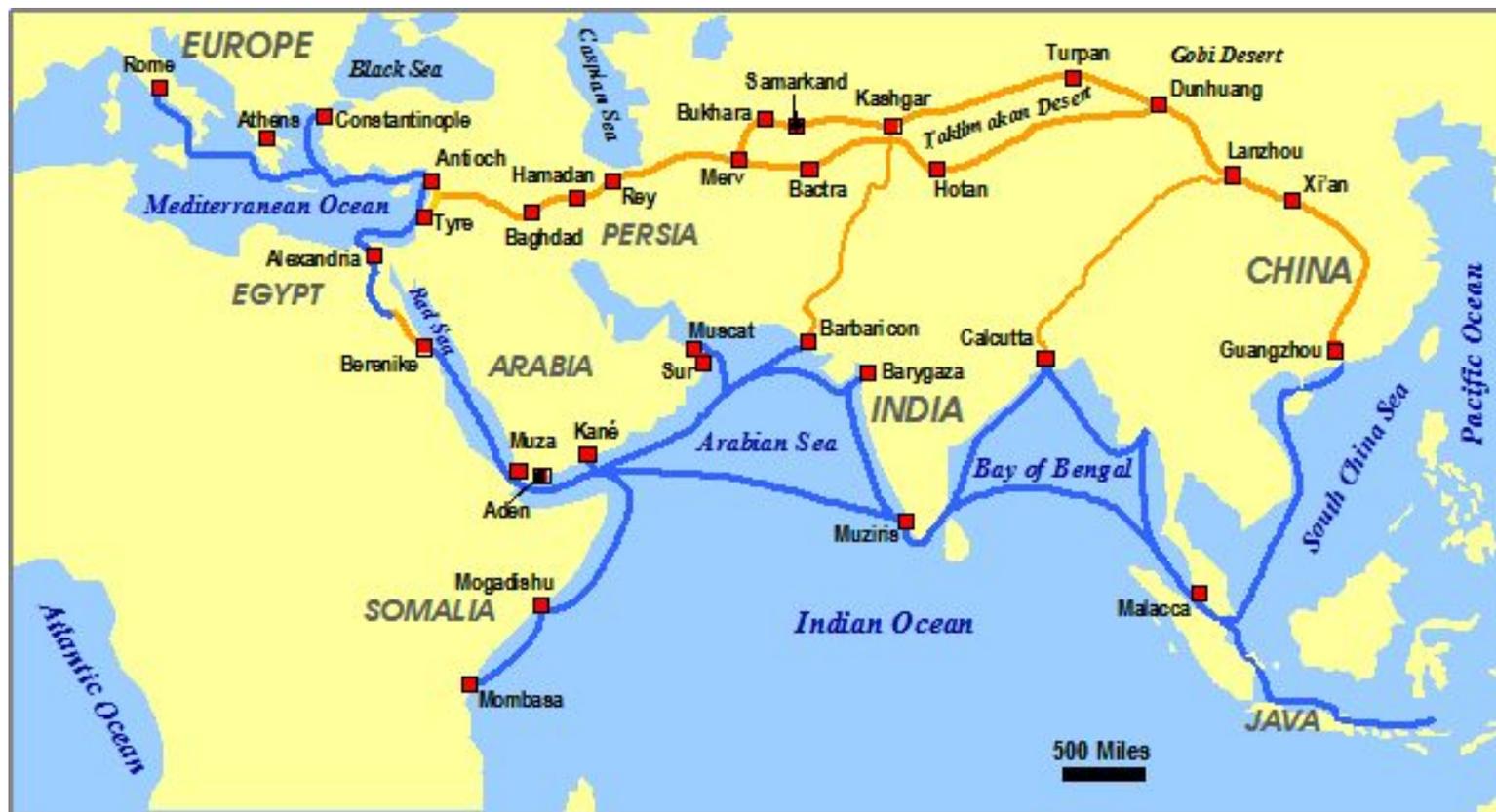
The **Silk Road** was the name given to routes that connected civilizations from the Mediterranean in the west to the Pacific Ocean in the east.

More than goods were passed on these routes—intercultural contact led to exchange of ideas and knowledge as well.

The Silk Road



The Silk Road



Video

TedED: “The Silk Road:
Connecting the ancient
world through grade”
Shannon Harris Castelo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vn3e37VWc0k>

5:19

Think Pair Share

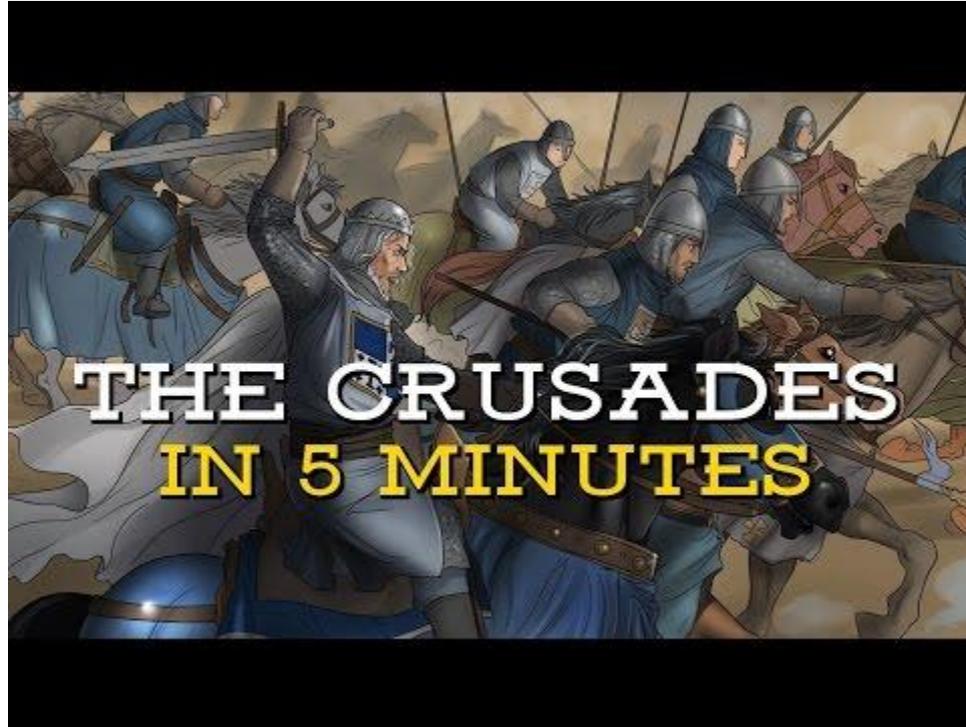
**Discuss the concept of
isolation-->intercultural contact-->change
in relation to trade and the Silk Road**

The Crusades and Trade

Trade between Venice and other Italian cities and the East had actually been re-established several centuries before the Polos' journeys. It happened as a result of a series of religious wars between the Christian and Muslim forces known as **“the Crusades”**

Muslims had already occupied Jerusalem for 400 years before the Crusades began in 1095. A series of 4 major crusades lasted until 1204.

The Crusades and Trade



The Crusades and Trade

There were 2 important results of the the Crusades for Europeans:

1. Contact with Muslim civilizations
2. Trade

The Crusades and Trade

During this time, the Muslim world was more advanced than Europe and because of travels, Europeans became exposed to new ideas about medicine, astronomy, philosophy, mathematics, and ancient literature.

In addition, Muslim societies were inclusive and welcomed contributions of Christian and Jewish scholars, spreading religious ideas and knowledge among people from different areas.

The Crusades and Trade

The Crusaders brought back to Europe many new goods, including **oil**, **spices**, and new varieties of **fruits** from the Muslim world.

The Europeans wanted more of these goods = increased trade between Europe and the East.

Many of the goods that Italian merchants began to bring in by sea after the Crusades were luxurious goods that were not available in Europe such as: precious **jewels**, **rugs**, and fabrics like **silk**, **muslin**, **taffeta**, and **satin**.

Goods from the East

The most sought after and valuable trade goods were **SPICES**. Spices improved the taste of Europeans' food. Pepper was so valuable that sellers counted it out peppercorn by peppercorn and it was worth more than its weight in gold!!

How do you think goods were moved? Discuss.

-at enormous expense

-to market towns on ships along the coast

-on boats along the rivers

-or, overland by horse, mule, or ox.

Resources

There was also trade for resources such as minerals (salt, iron, copper, lead), timber, fur, and fish exchange for cloth and manufactured goods produced in other areas.

Other goods that were shipped or traded: olive oil, wine, grains, raw wool, cloth.



FIGURE 2-8 Trade Routes in Renaissance Europe

What's in a WORD?

A "relief map" shows the different heights of land such as mountains and plains in an area. These are usually shown by colour or shading.



FIGURE 2-9 A Relief Map of Europe

Italian City-States

How did increased trade lead to the emergence of powerful city-states in Italy?

The Italian City-States

Renaissance Europe did not look the way Europe does today. Many countries had different borders. Others, like Italy, were not yet countries at all.

At the time, more countries were more like kingdoms or empires ruled by monarchs. Italy was a collection of **city-states**.

A city-state consists of a city that is politically independent and the rural area around it (hinterland).

Think about the large cities of Alberta. Why did they develop where they did? What factors made them prosper?





FIGURE 2-12 The City-States of Renaissance Italy How does the physical geography of Italy explain where cities developed? Consider factors such as rivers, mountains, and bays.

The Success of the City-States

1. **Geography:** Of all of Europe, Italy was closest to the port cities of Northern Africa and the Mediterranean Sea where spices and luxury goods were available for trade.

The Success of the City-States

2. Climate: The climate of Italy was more mild than more Northern countries. This meant that trade and travel were not interrupted by winter weather. There was also a very long growing season for crops like olives and grapes—important trade items.

The Success of the City-States

3. Leadership: Northern Italy was a collection of city-states that had independent governments and armies to control their own affairs, not like the rest of Europe with Monarchies (Kingdoms under rule of a royal family). Thus, there was a variety of banking and trading centres with different goods to offer.

The Success of the City-States

4. Social Organization: Feudalism was not strong in Italy and nobles lived in towns and took their place in the upper class.

Competition for Trade

Because the city-states all wanted to expand their trade and business, there was rivalry among them.

Competition for Trade

The city of **Venice** was founded on a group of **islands in a protected harbour**. It could easily defend itself from invasion.

At the height of its power, Venetian merchants had thousands of ships travelling throughout the Mediterranean and controlled the sea-routes.

Competition for Trade

Genoa, the other great maritime power in Italy, controlled a share of the trade in the Mediterranean and also Spanish ports.

For centuries Genoa and Venice were on equal terms. However, after the Genoese fleet was destroyed in a naval battle with Venice in 1380, Genoa never regained its power.

Why did Italian city-states go to war over trade? Discuss.

Commerce/Wealth in the City-States

The members of the Polo family were merchants.

How do merchants make money?

Merchants make money by purchasing goods in one place and selling them for a higher price in another place.

Merchants also bought and sold resources that needed to be manufactured into goods. (ex: raw wool to be made into cloth)

Commerce/Wealth in the City-States

As with peasants in England and France, there had been revolts in Florence, Italy.

Specifically, by the ciompi or “wood carders”, who did not belong to a guild (an association of merchants who oversee the practice of their craft/trade in a particular area).

Due to high unemployment they requested to form their own guild but were denied by the large guilds and government, which was run by wealthy merchants. The ciompi called for an uprising of the lower class.

****How does this relate to unions today?****

Commerce/Wealth in the City-States

Bankers also brought wealth into the city-states.

Florentine bankers established banking houses and boosted their “florin” (currency) to the most important currency during the course of the Renaissance.

Commerce/Wealth in the City-States

Usury, the practice of **charging interest** when loaning money to someone, played an important part in creating wealth.

The Church originally considered usury sinful.

To encourage investment in international trade, the Church began to allow charging interest for loans that involved **risk**. These included financing trading voyages where there was danger of shipwreck or robbery by pirates.

FIGURE 2-15 *The Money Lender and his Wife* was painted in 1514 by Quentin Metsys. How has the artist shown the wealth of the money lender? What does the artist suggest about the wife's worldview by showing her turning away from the religious book in her hand to look at the money?



Business Practice	Purpose
Partnerships and Joint Stock Company	Used to raise capital (money) for larger projects. Less financial risk to the individual.
Banks	Provided money-lending services as well as issuing Bills of Exchange.
Bills of Exchange	Worked like modern chequing account. Merchant would deposit gold and receive a Bill of Exchange. Could then turn that in for gold at other banks. Easier and safer than carrying gold along trade routes.
Insurance	Paid a small fee to insure goods during travel. If goods were damaged or lost, insurance company pays replacement costs. If goods arrive safely, insurance company keeps the fee.

Politics

Politics within the city-states was affected by the changing economy.





Middle and upper-class all wanted political power.

Merchants and bankers realized that constant struggles and warfare interfered with their ability to trade and make \$, so they began to support strong leaders who could promise them **stability**.



Italian and European bankers and merchants travelled around Europe on business.

This exposed other Europeans to the Italian lifestyle. Wealthy Europeans, artists, and scholars visited Italy and were impressed with the beautiful cities and sophistication of the Italians.

They spread Italian values and ideas across Europe

The Medici Family

The Medici Family was the famous and powerful family in Italy. They were an important part of Florence's cultural and political life for more than 300 years.

The Medici Family

The family made a fortune as wool and silk merchants and bankers.

They built alliances with other wealthy families, acquired important positions in the Church, and married into Europe's royal families.

The Medici Family

By 1434, Cosimo de Medici was powerful enough to take control of Florence. Because Florence was a republic (a state in which power is held by the people; a democracy), Cosimo Medici could not openly declare himself head of government, so instead, he used his wealth to buy support and exiled his enemies.

The Medici Family

Cosimo made alliances with some city-states and attacked others. Although he was a ruthless leader, he was also a huge supporter of the arts and began the Medici tradition of helping promising artists.

The most famous Medici was Cosimo's grandson, known as Lorenzo the Magnificent → He was a patron of the art and literature and sponsored Michelangelo, Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and other great thinkers.



The Medici family history involves many murders and assassinations, even by other family members.

1478	Giuliano stabbed to death
1503	Piero the Unfortunate drowned in a shipwreck
1526	Giovanni delle Barde Nere shot and killed attacking the city-state of Mantua
1535	Ippolito poisoned by order of his cousin
1537	Alessandro assassinated by his cousin Lorenzino
1547	Lorenzino assassinated by order of his cousin Cosimo I
1576	Isabella, daughter of Cosimo strangled in bed by her husband

FIGURE 2-17 Deaths in the Medici Family



Economics and Citizenship

After the Black Death the economy went into a depression. Wealthy people spending money on art due to the lack of business opportunities which lead to a growth in culture and art as well as the beautification of their cities.
