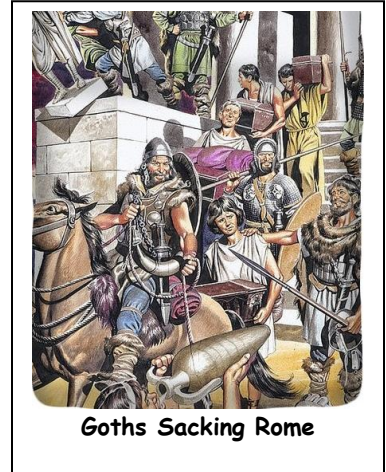# Early Middle Ages – An Intro

In 410 C.E., for the first time in over 800 years, the city of Rome fell to invaders. During the summer of 410, the Visigoths, a western European collection of Germanic peoples sometimes called the **Goths**, captured and sacked or ransacked and destroyed much of Rome. Many of Rome's citizens were taken prisoners as slaves, many buildings along with its libraries of collected knowledge were destroyed and much of its wealth was stolen. All that was good about Rome, it's laws, it's public institutions, it's value placed on learning was to be lost. The light that was Rome was extinguished or put out, and Europe would enter into what is now called the Dark Ages.

The Dark Ages is also called the Middle Ages, because it covers the time between the height of human civilization with the Roman Empire, and the resurgence or rebirth of knowledge and human organization in a period known as the Renaissance.

Goths Sacking Rome

With no central form of governance like what the Romans had, Europe would instead see the rise of many different local groups of peoples who would identify with themselves and attempt to organize themselves into some form of "civilized" life, often under the leadership of Kings. The most notable groups of peoples were the Franks, the Anglo-Saxons and Celts, and the Vikings.

Religion, specifically Christianity would also play an important part during the Middle Ages and how the Christian Church used religious beliefs to consolidate power and wealth will allow Christianity to not only influence Europe during the Middle Ages, but will set the stage for it being a powerful actor in the lives of people in Europe and the rest of the world in the centuries that followed.

Christianity and the Church

Of the three major **monotheistic** religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it will be Christianity and more importantly the Roman Catholic church that will have the greatest and longest lasting influence on Europe and all of its peoples. The Roman Catholic Church and its leader the Pope will spread its beliefs throughout Europe with its **missionaries** and with its rigid structure and organization it would often work hand -in-hand with local kings to spread its beliefs and acquire wealth. Kings would grant favours to the church, often by supplying land, allowing them to collect taxes, or in some cases even paying the church in gold and gifts, and in return, the Church would support the King by telling the people that it was their heavenly duty to obey not only the Church, but the kings as well. In this sense the Church and Kings worked together in order to gain wealth and hold power over the people of Europe.

Goths - A united group of Germanic tribes that fought together against the power and influence of Rome.

Monotheism - A belief in a single God as opposed to Polytheism which is a belief in many Gods.

Missionaries - Devoted religious people who would spend their lives travelling around the world convincing people to believe in their teachings.

The Divide in Christianity

Like all religions, followers will often disagree about important interpretations of their beliefs, and often these differences of opinions result in hatred and violence against each other. During the Middle Ages, Christianity was no different. Just like the second half of the Roman Empire, Christianity in Europe was divided between East and West. These two different interpretations of Christianity would eventually develop into Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy. The Catholics would base itself out of Rome and would eventually influence most of Western Europe. Eastern Orthodoxy would centre its capital around Byzantium (known today as Constantinople), and would influence the people around south-eastern Europe and the Middle East. Both religions believed in the teachings of Jesus Christ, but differed in specific interpretations of his teaching as well as the supremacy of the Catholic leader the Pope.

Feudal Europe

Feudalism is the name given to how people are governed by Kings. The term is most often applied to European history but feudalism was also used in Asia. After the fall of Rome there was a "power vacuum" meaning that there was an absence of any real type of political or governmental organization. Without a strong central government that can provide laws, infrastructure, rules for trade and civil order, local tribal chieftains evolved into Kings. Kings maintained power and protected their people from others with military force. Feudalism is where local lords or nobles rule over local people and oversee the local creation of wealth (often in terms of food or raw resources). These nobles then pledge their loyalty to a King and provide him with soldiers, food and wealth in return for his protection. The Middle Ages is a Feudal society but in order to keep the people in line and do what the nobles and kings wanted, something more was needed, and that's where religion comes in.

> **Feudalism** - A form of governance that evolved out of the ruins of the Roman Empire. It is based on local lords or nobles providing soldiers, food and wealth to a king in return for his protection.
>
> **State** - Another name for an individual government or country.

Influence and Organization the Relationship Between Church and State

People of the Middle Ages were very religious. Their understanding of the world came from the only people who could still read and write, which were the religious leaders of the church. The church used their influence to both support Kings and further increase their wealth. Because the Christian leaders of the church could read, write, add, subtract and organize and communicate with themselves all over Europe, they were also able to provide the services needed for any type of government or **state** that needs to organize and control large groups of people. Kings were good at providing soldiers and military power, the Church was good at providing influence over the people. The church and the Kings would work together in the Middle Ages to rule over and slowly drag people out of the "Dark Ages".

Early Middle Ages – An Intro

Directions: READ the handout entitled; "Early Middle Ages – An Intro" and then answer the following questions;

1. Use your handout, the internet or a dictionary to provide definitions for the following terms; (1 mark each)

Goths	_____ _____ _____
Monotheism	_____ _____ _____
Missionaries	_____ _____ _____
Feudalism	_____ _____ _____

State	_____
	_____
	_____

2. On a separate piece of paper, answer the following questions using **COMPLETE SENTENCES and or fill in the blanks instead (your choice this time)**;

    a. In your own words, describe who would sack Rome and put the end to the Roman Empire. Why would the time period following the Roman Empire be come to be known as the "Dark Ages"?. (2 marks for quality of response and inclusion of details)

The Germanic tribe called the _____ would sack Rome. The time period following would be called the "Dark Ages" because _____ _____ .

    b. Identify the three monotheistic religions of the world. In your own words, identify and describe how one of them came to dominate Europe. (2 marks for the quality of your response and evidence of thought and effort)

The three monotheistic religion are; _____ , _____ , and _____ . The religion _____ would come to dominate Europe.

    c. In your own words, describe how Feudalism works and describe the role that the church played in supporting Feudalism. (2 marks for quality of response and evidence of insight)
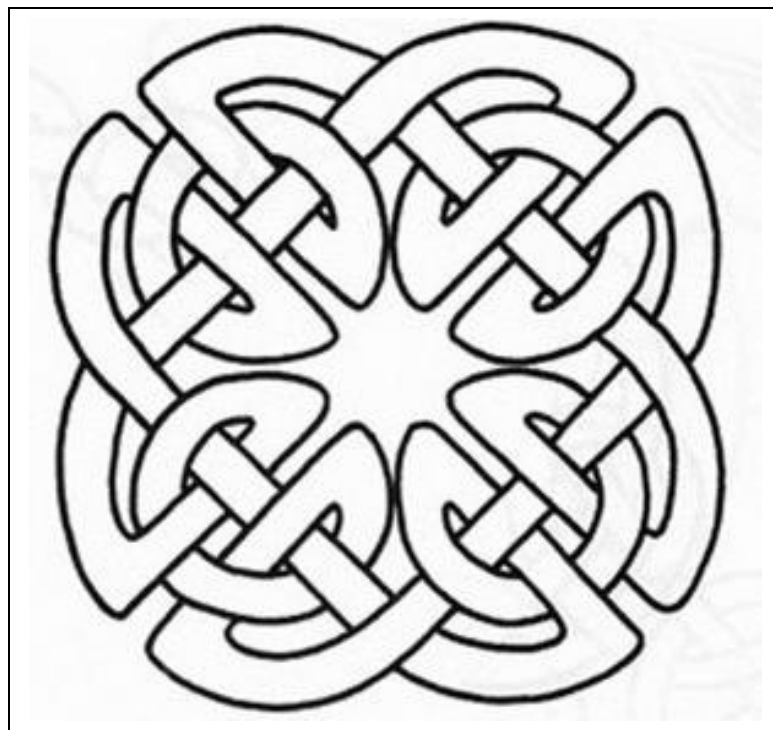
Feudalism works by having local _____ govern local people and they provide the King with _____ , _____ and _____ in return for protection. The church supported Feudalism by convincing the people that they should _____ their King.

3. Celtic Art - The Celts are a group of people that existed prior to and after the fall of Rome. In addition to being great warriors, they excelled in metal craft, woodworking and artistic design. Colour the following Celtic design AND in the space provided try your own hand at a traditional Celtic Weave design.

<u>You will be marked out of 5 for quality of work and evidence of effort</u>

Total: _____ /17

Directions: Using three complimentary colours, colour in the following weave and the background. There are two specific bands that weave in and out of each other, use a felt to outline each weave and then shade in with a pencil crayon. Shade in the background with a third colour.

Now try your own simple weave pattern like the one of the examples provided.