The Later Middle Ages: The Crusades (1095-1291)
Background

Late in the 11th century, the Byzantine emperor at Constantinople appealed to the Roman Catholic Church for military aid against the **Muslim Turks**. The R/Catholic Church sympathized, partly because the Turks threatened the Orthodox Church but mainly because the **Muslims controlled Palestine, the Holy land** and molested Christian pilgrims.

Consequently, Pope Urban II, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, summoned western Christendom **to wrest the Holy land from the Muslims** by waging a religious war, or Crusade.
First Crusade
The pope's plea aroused enthusiasm among
a. religious persons who believed that “God wills it,”

b. Christians who desired papal forgiveness of their sins,

c. nobles who expected to acquire new lands and great riches,

d. middle class merchants who wanted increased trade,

e. serfs who sought escape from feudal oppression, and

f. adventurers who welcomed travel and excitement.
Of seven major crusades over a period of almost 200 years, the most significant were the First, Third and Fourth Crusades.

The First Crusade, started in 1096, was a well organized military expedition. Its outstanding leader was Godfrey of Bouillon. This Crusade

- drove the Muslims from part of Palestine,
- established a Christian kingdom in the Holy Land, and
- gained control of Jerusalem.

Nearly 100 years later, in 1187, Jerusalem was retaken by the Muslims, led by Saladin. The loss of the Holy City caused western Europe to undertake the Third Crusade.
Second Crusade
Third Crusade

The Third Crusade, started in 1189, was led by three kings: Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Philip Augustus of France, and Richard the Lion Hearted of England.

Although this Crusade failed to recapture Jerusalem, Richard persuaded Saladin to grant safe passage to Christian pilgrims.
Third Crusade
The Fourth Crusade

The ambitions of the important trading city of Venice succeeded in diverting the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople where they turned on their Byzantine allies and fellow Christians, sacking the city and establishing a Latin emperor who lasted for about 70 years before the Byzantines regained their historic capital.

The Venetians had been competitors of the Byzantines for trade in the eastern Mediterranean.

The city was looted of many of its great treasures and artistic achievements.

The eastern Christians and Byzantines would retain a deep mistrust of the west for centuries.

Even after the Byzantines restored their capital, the city and empire were only a shadow of their former selves.
Fourth Crusade
A Failure!

Subsequent Crusades likewise failed to establish Christian rule in Palestine.

By 1291 the Muslim Turks again completely controlled the holy land. They retained it until after WW1 (1918).

But, could it be called a “successful failure?” Let’s see its effects!
Effects of the Crusades

Because the Crusades wrought great changes in western European life, they mark the beginning of the end of the Middle Ages.

a. **Broadened Peoples’ Outlook.** The Crusaders were exposed to the advanced Muslim and Byzantine civilizations. They observed powerful governments, great cities, flourishing trade, prosperous industry, and progress in the arts and sciences. The Crusaders also increased geographical knowledge. Upon returning home, they introduced new ideas and tastes.
b. **Stimulated Trade and Towns.** The Crusades increased European demand for Eastern products: spices, sugar, silk, rugs, paper, glassware, and precious stones.

Throughout western Europe, but especially in Italy,

1. Trade increased’

2. Money replaced barter

3. Towns grew in number and size,

4. The bourgeoisie(middle class) acquired wealth and influence. The Italian cities also grew richer by furnishing supplies to the crusaders.
Effects of the Crusades

c. Strengthened the Kings or Central Governments. The Crusades increased the king’s powers by:

1. **Weakening the Nobility.** Some nobles sold their lands to raise money for the Crusades, thereby losing their base of feudal power. Many nobles were killed in the Crusades, thus removing threats to royal power.

2. **Stimulating Trade.** Since trade requires a central authority to provide law and order, the rising merchant class opposed the feudal lords and supported the kings.
Effects of the Crusades

d. **Weakened Serfdom.** The Crusades enabled many serfs to escape from feudalism.

- Some serfs gained freedom by joining the Crusades,
- Other serfs paid for the use of the lord’s land in money rather than in products and services. The lords preferred money to buy equipment for the Crusades or to purchase eastern luxuries; the serfs earned money by selling surplus crops in nearby cities. Slowly the relationship between serf and lord evolved into the relationship of tenant and landlord.
- Still other serfs fled to the growing towns. After a year and a day undetected, a serf became legally free.
Effects of the Crusades

e. **Encouraged Learning.** The Crusades stimulated European interest in education by showing that the Byzantines and Muslims had
   • preserved and utilized Greco-Roman knowledge,
   • maintained great universities, and
   • advanced in mathematics, science, literature and art.