

End of the Middle Ages

Introduction

By the end of the Middle Ages, feudalism began to decline, and Europe entered a new era. The growth of the middle class brought Europe into a new period.

1) The Black Death

One of the most significant factors that led to the end of the Middle Ages was the Black Death, a deadly plague that swept through Europe between 1347 and 1351. The Black Death killed an estimated one-third of Europe's population, creating a labor shortage.

With fewer workers available, peasants gained more power in negotiating their wages and working conditions. As a result, the feudal system, which depended on the labor of peasants, started to weaken.

2) Growth of Trade and Commerce

During the late Middle Ages, trade and commerce began to grow across Europe. The revival of trade led to the development of towns and cities, which became centers of economic activity.



As people moved to towns and cities for better opportunities, the feudal system, which relied on people working the land, started to decline. During the middle ages, between 80-90% of all people worked in farming. In the Renaissance period after the middle ages, this percentage dropped significantly because people obtained jobs in medicine, trading, carpentry, and other professions.

As more people obtained jobs outside of farming, they were being paid with money. The growth of a money-based economy made it easier for peasants to buy their freedom, further weakening the feudal system.

3) Rise of Nation-States

At the end of the Middle Ages, big countries called nation-states formed when smaller kingdoms joined together under powerful leaders. Kings and queens became more powerful, and local lords and nobles had less control. Governments started to have their own armies, so lords didn't need to help the king with soldiers anymore. This made the lords' role as protectors and military leaders less important.

People started to feel more loyal to the king or queen and the whole country instead of just their local lords. This helped make the country more stable and better at making decisions.

Nation-states also helped trade and business grow, which led to the growth of towns and cities and a new group of people called the middle class. This group, made up of merchants, craftspeople, and other professionals, changed the way society was organized, as people could get rich and successful without relying on owning land. This helped bring an end to the Middle Ages and the old social system called feudalism.

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Questions

How did each factor below lead to the end of feudalism?

The Black Death	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Growth of Towns	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Rise of Nation States	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer

1) What grew during the late Middle Ages?	Feudalism	Trade/Commerce
2) What new social group emerged?	Middle Class	Upper Class
3) What developed at the end of the Middle Ages?	Nation States	More Manors
4) What became less important for lords?	Land	Military Support
5) Who formed the middle class?	Farmers	Professionals
6) During the middle ages, what percent were farmers?	80-90	90-100
7) Kings lost/gained power as feudalism ended	Lost	Gained