

FEUDALISM

IN THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES



Rome didn't collapse all at once. It happened over an extended period of many years, after repeated attacks from the Huns and Goths. The Huns were nomadic warrior tribes. The Goths split into two groups, one group that became federates of the Roman Empire and one group that joined the Huns. Rome had for centuries battled Germanic tribes that attacked "the eternal city," as Rome was called.

In 476, the Germanic ruler Odoacer staged a revolt and deposed (took the crown from) Romulus Augustulus, the last Emperor of Rome. Since there was no large system of government in Europe when Rome fell, Europe entered a time of decline.

One invasion after another in Europe had catastrophic results. Because of the invasions, merchants' businesses closed and the cities that had previously been economic centers were destroyed. Trade and intellectual life disappeared. The Germanic invaders had a rich history in songs and legends, but they could not read and write. The people moved out of the cities to grow their own food in rural areas and schools closed. There was no longer education. Except for priests and church officials, no one could read or write. Due to the lack of education, Latin became mixed with other languages, and soon villages could not understand each other. The knowledge of Greek language was almost lost.

There was no central government that held things together. Fighting from village to village ravished the security of the people. Medieval Europe was in chaos, but the people needed some form of a political system to defend themselves.

Feudalism was based on agreements between vassals and lords, and it took care of all aspects of society with the exception of religion. Europe became a land of many small kingdoms called fiefs, benefitting only the wealthy people. It was a very hard life for those who were not wealthy. Each king set his own laws and manufactured his own money. Feudalism was three systems wrapped up in one: a social hierarchy, a political system, and an economic system.

WHILE YOU'RE READING...

MARK WITH SYMBOLS

! when you find something interesting.

? when you are unsure or confused by something.

***** when you find something important.

HIGHLIGHT WITH COLORS

yellow power words or key terms

green key phrases and definitions



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Questions I have while reading:

Summary of what I have read:



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Question 1: How would you describe Feudalism in the Early Middle Ages of Europe?

Question 2: How did the Germanic invasions affect Europe?

Question 3: Why do you think a central government was needed during this time? How would this have helped the people in Medieval Europe?

