

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades



Introduction

The Crusades

Introduction

Click on the dates in the timeline to learn more about the long conflict between the Crusaders and the Muslims, and the effects of these holy wars.

Image: The remains of Krak des Chevaliers, a Crusader castle in Syria



Bef... The First Cru... The Secon... The Third ... The Fourt... Further Cr...

Click on the dates in the timeline to learn more about the long conflict between the Crusaders and the Muslims, and the effects of these holy wars.

Image: The remains of Krak des Chevaliers, a Crusader castle in Syria

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1071

The Crusades

1071

By 1025 A.D. (C.E.), the Byzantine Empire was the largest it had been since the seventh century. Visitors to its capital city were astounded at the display of wealth and cultural development. However, the empire soon experienced pressure from invading peoples. Those invaders included the Seljuk Turks, who moved into the heartland of the empire that the Byzantines relied on for food and other resources. In 1071, a Turkish army succeeded in defeating Byzantine forces, and the emperor, Alexius I, was growing desperate.




Image: The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople)

1071

Before the Crusades ru... The Secon... The Third ... The Fourt... Further Cr...

By 1025 A.D. (C.E.), the Byzantine Empire was the largest it had been since the seventh century. Visitors to its capital city were astounded at the display of wealth and cultural development. However, the empire soon experienced pressure from invading peoples. Those invaders included the Seljuk Turks, who moved into the heartland of the empire that the Byzantines relied on for food and other resources. In 1071, a Turkish army succeeded in defeating Byzantine forces, and the emperor, Alexius I, was growing desperate.

Image: The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul (Constantinople)

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1095

The Crusades

1095

The Crusades were a series of wars carried out by Christian religious and political leaders in an effort to take control of the Holy Land from the Muslims. It began when Byzantine emperor Alexius I asked European leaders for help in defending his empire against the invading Seljuk Turks.

Image: A portrait of Emperor Alexius I, from a Greek manuscript



1095

Before the Crusades ru... The Secon... The Third ... The Fourt... Further Cr...

The Crusades were a series of wars carried out by Christian religious and political leaders in an effort to take control of the Holy Land from the Muslims. It began when Byzantine emperor Alexius I asked European leaders for help in defending his empire against the invading Seljuk Turks.

Image: A portrait of Emperor Alexius I, from a Greek manuscript

Module 11: The High Middle Ages


Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1095

The Crusades

1095

Pope Urban II decided to take advantage of this opportunity and provide papal leadership. He traveled to southern France in 1095 to organize a gathering of church leaders and discuss religious topics in the Council of Clermont. On November 27th, the Pope gave a passionate speech calling for a Holy War to defend the Christian faith. Although the initial goal was to defend the Byzantine Empire from the Muslims, at some point the focus shifted to the liberation of Jerusalem from the Muslims. The Pope promised that any Christian who took up the cause would receive freedom from taxes and remission from sin. Also, if any Crusader were to die for the cause, he would receive immediate entry into heaven. For the next nine months, Pope Urban II traveled to various cities in France to recruit fighters. The warriors, who made up what would become the crusades' first army, were mostly knights from France who were inspired by religious fervor. Other fighters were attracted to the idea of adventure and the possibility of earning titles, riches, and territory.



1095

Before the Crusades | ru... | The Secon... | The Third ... | The Fourt... | Further Cr...

Pope Urban II decided to take advantage of this opportunity and provide papal leadership. He traveled to southern France in 1095 to organize a gathering of church leaders and discuss religious topics in the Council of Clermont. On November 27th, the Pope gave a passionate speech calling for a Holy War to defend the Christian faith. Although the initial goal was to defend the Byzantine Empire from the Muslims, at some point the focus shifted to the liberation of Jerusalem from the Muslims. The Pope promised that any Christian who took up the cause would receive freedom from taxes and remission from sin. Also, if any Crusader were to die for the cause, he would receive immediate entry into heaven. For the next nine months, Pope Urban II traveled to various cities in France to recruit fighters. The warriors, who made up what would become the crusades' first army, were mostly knights from France who were inspired by religious fervor. Other fighters were attracted to the idea of adventure and the possibility of earning titles, riches, and territory.

Image: A drawing of Pope Urban II

Module 11: The High Middle Ages


Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1096-1099

The Crusades

1096-1099

The First Crusade took place from 1096 to 1099. Three bands of armies made their way east and captured the city of Antioch in 1098. Continuing down the Palestinian coast, they made their way to Jerusalem in 1099. Muslims and Jews fought together to defend Jerusalem, but the Crusaders pillaged the city, destroyed mosques, and massacred as many as seventy thousand of its inhabitants. The citizens of Jerusalem were not the only victims of the First Crusade. Some Christians argued that allowing Jewish independence while taking up arms against Muslims was unacceptable. The first widespread massacre of Jews occurred during the First Crusade and ignited a tradition of organized violence against them that would become a feature of medieval European life. After further conquests, the Crusaders



1096-1099

Bef... **The First Crusade** The Secon... The Third ... The Fourt... Further Cr...

The First Crusade took place from 1096 to 1099. Three bands of armies made their way east and captured the city of Antioch in 1098. Continuing down the Palestinian coast, they made their way to Jerusalem in 1099. Muslims and Jews fought together to defend Jerusalem, but the Crusaders pillaged the city, destroyed mosques, and massacred as many as seventy thousand of its inhabitants. The citizens of Jerusalem were not the only victims of the First Crusade. Some Christians argued that allowing Jewish independence while taking up arms against Muslims was unacceptable. The first widespread massacre of Jews occurred during the First Crusade and ignited a tradition of organized violence against them that would become a feature of medieval European life. After further conquests, the Crusaders established a total of four principalities: Edessa, Antioch, Tripoli, and Jerusalem. Because they were still surrounded by Muslim territories, these states depended on Europe for supplies. As a result, Italian port cities such as Genoa, Pisa, and Venice grew very wealthy and powerful from the trade. The Byzantines were outraged that the Crusaders had refused to return territory to them as promised.

Image: The capture of Jerusalem during the First Crusade.

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades


1145-1149

The Crusades

1145-1149

It was not easy for the Crusaders to maintain their stronghold in the East. In 1144, the Muslims struck back and reclaimed Edessa, igniting the Second Crusade. However, this endeavor was not as successful as the First Crusade. The Crusaders failed to take control of the city of Damascus, and their only major victory was the capture of Lisbon, Portugal. This victory proved pivotal in the effort to expel Muslim occupation of the Iberian Peninsula.

Image: The siege of Lisbon



1145-1149

Bef... The First Cru... **The Second Crusade** Third ... The Fourt... Further Cr...

It was not easy for the Crusaders to maintain their stronghold in the East. In 1144, the Muslims struck back and reclaimed Edessa, igniting the Second Crusade. However, this endeavor was not as successful as the First Crusade. The Crusaders failed to take control of the city of Damascus, and their only major victory was the capture of Lisbon, Portugal. This victory proved pivotal in the effort to expel Muslim occupation of the Iberian Peninsula.

Image: The siege of Lisbon

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1189-1192

The Crusades

1189-1192

When Jerusalem fell to the Muslim leader Saladin in 1187, three European rulers joined forces to fight in the Third Crusade. These leaders were Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Philip II of France, and Richard I of England. Frederick was the first to set out for the Holy Land. During his travels, his horse slipped while crossing a river. Frederick was thrown against some rocks and drowned. Most of his troops returned home discouraged before his successor replaced his command.

Meanwhile, the English and French forces made arrangements to arrive by sea and captured key coastal cities from the Muslims, but they were unable to move inland. Furthermore, Philip and Richard had their own



1189-1192

Bef... The First Cru... The Secon... **The Third Crusade** The Four... Further Cr...

When Jerusalem fell to the Muslim leader Saladin in 1187, three European rulers joined forces to fight in the Third Crusade. These leaders were Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Philip II of France, and Richard I of England. Frederick was the first to set out for the Holy Land. During his travels, his horse slipped while crossing a river. Frederick was thrown against some rocks and drowned. Most of his troops returned home discouraged before his successor replaced his command.

Meanwhile, the English and French forces made arrangements to arrive by sea and captured key coastal cities from the Muslims, but they were unable to move inland. Furthermore, Philip and Richard had their own personal quarrels over political alliances. After they succeeded in capturing the port city of Acre, Philip returned home. Richard succeeded in capturing and retaining the city of Jaffa and managed to negotiate a treaty with Saladin, who suffered several defeats despite outnumbering the Crusaders. The settlement agreed upon between Richard and Saladin allowed unarmed Christian pilgrims and traders free access to Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the failure to recapture Jerusalem inspired the Fourth Crusade.

Image: The Siege of Acre during the Third Crusade

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades


1200-1201

The Crusades

1200-1201

Several years after Saladin died in 1193, Pope Innocent III called for a Fourth Crusade to take back the city of Jerusalem. In the end, only a small fraction of the Crusaders who set out from Europe actually reached the original destination of Jerusalem.

The Fourth Crusade had bad luck from the start. The families of Europe had grown tired of supplying their young men to the struggle. If they returned home at all, it was usually after they served for ten to twenty years, so fewer and fewer people signed up to fight. One military leader of the Fourth Crusade was an Italian count named Boniface of Montferrat. His strategy was to avoid a perilous journey over land, and travel to Egypt with a naval fleet.



1200-1201

Bef... The First Cru... The Secon... The Third ... **The Fourth Crusade** ther Cr...

Several years after Saladin died in 1193, Pope Innocent III called for a Fourth Crusade to take back the city of Jerusalem. In the end, only a small fraction of the Crusaders who set out from Europe actually reached the original destination of Jerusalem.

The Fourth Crusade had bad luck from the start. The families of Europe had grown tired of supplying their young men to the struggle. If they returned home at all, it was usually after they served for ten to twenty years, so fewer and fewer people signed up to fight. One military leader of the Fourth Crusade was an Italian count named Boniface of Montferrat. His strategy was to avoid a perilous journey over land, and travel to Egypt with a naval fleet. Boniface of Montferrat negotiated expensive naval arrangements with Venice, but he defaulted on full payment when only a third of the projected soldiers showed up. This was after the Venetians greatly sacrificed other economic activity for nearly a full year to build and man these ships. The one benefit that did come to Venice was that the Crusaders won back control of Zara, an important trading partner for Venice.

Image: Boniface elected as leader of the Fourth Crusade

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1201-1202

The Crusades

1201-1202

Before the Crusaders could set another goal in the Muslim controlled territory, there was a division over whether to become involved in the struggle over the Byzantine throne. The emperor, Isaac II, had recently been deposed by his brother, Alexius III. Isaac's son, Alexius IV, fled Constantinople and sought refuge in Philip's court. He convinced the Italian Crusaders he met there to overthrow Alexius III, and make him ruler of the Byzantine Empire in exchange for riches, military support, and control of the Eastern Orthodox Church under the Pope. Word of this offer quickly spread back to Zara.

As groups of Crusaders left Zara to attack Constantinople, some of the Crusaders refused to sack the city and continued onto Syria or returned home. Some even returned to Zara to attack the city they just left. Pope Innocent III issued another warning against attacking Christian people, but did not condemn the Constantinople mission outright. Although the people of Zara visibly announced their Catholic faith by hanging banners with crosses from the windows and walls of the city, the Crusaders pillaged the city in November 1202, and divided the spoils. Pope Innocent III responded by excommunicating the Venetians and the Crusaders. The military leaders decided to hide this notice from their army. In any event, the Pope concluded that the Crusaders had been blackmailed by the Venetians and rescinded the excommunication of all non-Venetian Crusaders.



Before the Crusaders could set another goal in the Muslim controlled territory, there was a division over whether to become involved in the struggle over the Byzantine throne. The emperor, Isaac II, had recently been deposed by his brother, Alexius III. Isaac's son, Alexius IV, fled Constantinople and sought refuge in Philip's court. He convinced the Italian Crusaders he met there to overthrow Alexius III, and make him ruler of the Byzantine Empire in exchange for riches, military support, and control of the Eastern Orthodox Church under the Pope. Word of this offer quickly spread back to Zara.

As groups of Crusaders left Zara to attack Constantinople, some of the Crusaders refused to sack the city and continued onto Syria or returned home. Some even returned to Zara to attack the city they just left. Pope Innocent III issued another warning against attacking Christian people, but did not condemn the Constantinople mission outright. Although the people of Zara visibly announced their Catholic faith by hanging banners with crosses from the windows and walls of the city, the Crusaders pillaged the city in November 1202, and divided the spoils. Pope Innocent III responded by excommunicating the Venetians and the Crusaders. The military leaders decided to hide this notice from their army. In any event, the Pope concluded that the Crusaders had been blackmailed by the Venetians and rescinded the excommunication of all non-Venetian Crusaders.

Image: German King Philip

Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1203

The Crusades

1203

Meanwhile, the people of Constantinople were content with their new ruler. When the Crusaders managed to enter the borders of Constantinople, displaying Alexius IV as the soon-to-be emperor, they were puzzled to receive taunts from the Byzantine people rather than a warm welcome for liberating them, as the Crusaders had been led to believe. Alexius III secretly slipped out and fled, abandoning his subjects. Byzantine officials quickly reinstated his brother Isaac II. This left the Crusaders in a quandary: they had successfully overthrown Alexius III, but how could they depose a legitimate ruler in order to crown Alexius IV and receive their payment? They insisted that they would only recognize Isaac II as ruler if Alexius IV were crowned co-emperor, and the Byzantines agreed.

Image: Alexius IV, Byzantine Emperor



1203

Bef... The First Cru... The Secon... The Third ... **The Fourth Crusade** ther Cr...

Meanwhile, the people of Constantinople were content with their new ruler. When the Crusaders managed to enter the borders of Constantinople, displaying Alexius IV as the soon-to-be emperor, they were puzzled to receive taunts from the Byzantine people rather than a warm welcome for liberating them, as the Crusaders had been led to believe. Alexius III secretly slipped out and fled, abandoning his subjects. Byzantine officials quickly reinstated his brother Isaac II. This left the Crusaders in a quandary: they had successfully overthrown Alexius III, but how could they depose a legitimate ruler in order to crown Alexius IV and receive their payment? They insisted that they would only recognize Isaac II as ruler if Alexius IV were crowned co-emperor, and the Byzantines agreed.

Image: Alexius IV, Byzantine Emperor

Module 11: The High Middle Ages


Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

April 1204

The Crusades

April 1204

Alexius IV found it very difficult to pay the Crusaders what he had promised. The empire's opposition to his reign grew after he ordered the melting of valuable Byzantine and Roman icons in order to harvest its silver and gold as payment to the Crusaders. Alexius IV was eventually murdered and replaced by the popular military leader Alexius V. The Crusaders demanded that the new emperor honor the promises made by Alexius IV. When Alexius V refused, the Crusaders neglected orders from the Pope to refrain from attack and once again sieged the city. Alexius V commanded his army to defend the city while he himself fled during the night. The sack of Constantinople was horrific. For three days, the Crusaders looted ancient artwork, plundered the imperial treasury, desecrated the icons of the holy church Hagia Sophia, and raped and massacred innocent people, including women and children.



April 1204

Bef... The First Cru... The Secon... The Third ... **The Fourth Crusade** ther Cr...

Alexius IV found it very difficult to pay the Crusaders what he had promised. The empire's opposition to his reign grew after he ordered the melting of valuable Byzantine and Roman icons in order to harvest its silver and gold as payment to the Crusaders. Alexius IV was eventually murdered and replaced by the popular military leader Alexius V. The Crusaders demanded that the new emperor honor the promises made by Alexius IV. When Alexius V refused, the Crusaders neglected orders from the Pope to refrain from attack and once again sieged the city. Alexius V commanded his army to defend the city while he himself fled during the night. The sack of Constantinople was horrific. For three days, the Crusaders looted ancient artwork, plundered the imperial treasury, desecrated the icons of the holy church Hagia Sophia, and raped and massacred innocent people, including women and children.

Image: The capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders during the Fourth Crusade


Module 11: The High Middle Ages

Topic 2 Content: The Crusades

1204-1291

The Crusades

1204-1291



When Pope Innocent III heard about the sack of Constantinople, he was outraged at the Crusaders and strongly rebuked them. Later, he allowed them to return to the church, however, the Byzantine Empire would never again regain its former power. Greatly reduced in size, the surviving remnants of the once impressive empire collapsed when the Ottoman Turks seized Constantinople in 1453.

Image: Capturing Damietta during the Fifth Crusade

1204-1291

Bef... The First Cru... The Secon... The Third ... The Four... Further Cr...

When Pope Innocent III heard about the sack of Constantinople, he was outraged at the Crusaders and strongly rebuked them. Later, he allowed them to return to the church; however, the Byzantine Empire would never again regain its former power. Greatly reduced in size, the surviving remnants of the once impressive empire collapsed when the Ottoman Turks seized Constantinople in 1453.

Image: Capturing Damietta during the Fifth Crusade