

The World in 300 C.E.

How did the distant regions of the world become more interconnected through medieval and early modern times?

Introduction

In *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*, you will learn about various peoples, cultures, and civilizations that existed thousands of years ago and in unique locations all across the globe. Each of these groups arose in different places and at different times. But there are many common themes among them.

These similarities include the settlement of people based on geography and climate as well as the development of social structures. Also, you'll learn about the development of arts, architecture, writing, government, politics, and religion within these regions. You will also read about how webs of trade routes connected these peoples and brought them new ideas and products. Finally, you'll discover how huge kingdoms and empires rose from rural and urban societies as well as why they failed.

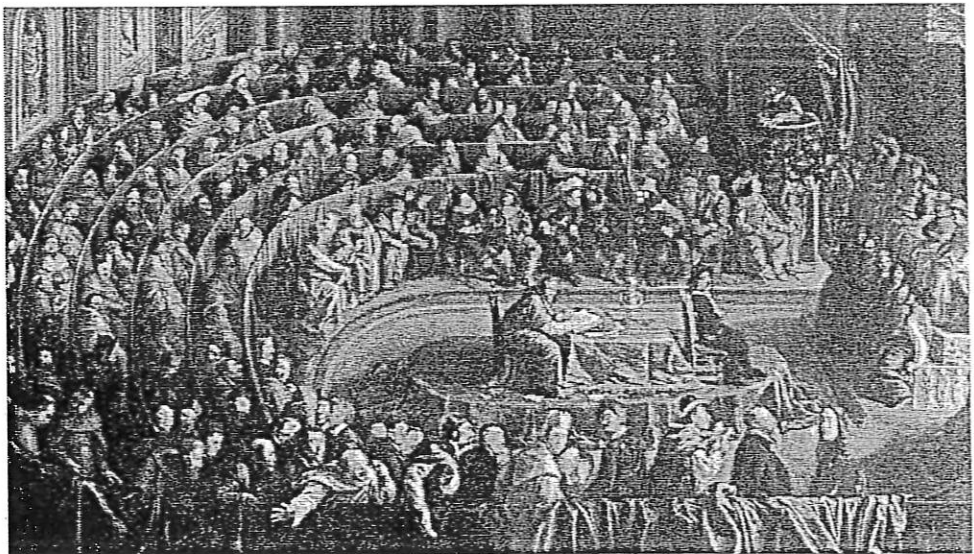
Throughout this program, you'll learn about various groups based on their location in the world. But first, let's explore them based on their common themes. Keep these patterns in mind as you explore the wonders of the medieval world.

1. Thematic Approach

Historians use themes to identify patterns in history. Many possible themes can apply to historical events. Two broad themes are continuity and change, that is, the way things have stayed the same or changed over time. Two other broad themes are integration and difference.

Integration refers to ways in which the peoples of the world have been drawn together by historical factors. *Difference* concerns how they have remained distinct and diverse.

History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond highlights six themes in world history: human-environment interaction, rise of empires, growth and changes in societies, development of political institutions and ideas, belief systems, and interconnectedness of societies.



Studying history with these themes in mind will help you make connections among events and interpret the past.

① **Human-Environment Interaction** The interaction between humans and the environment is the first theme. The environment has been a key factor in human activity throughout history. The fact that people have to operate within the limits of the natural world has helped shape their actions. It has affected how and where people live and how they support themselves. At the same time, human actions have also changed the environment in many ways.

This theme covers topics such as:

- disease
- population growth
- migration
- patterns of human settlement

These factors can reflect or influence conditions in the environment. Another topic is the environmental impact of technology, a major concern today because of energy use and climate change. Throughout history, however—from the birth of farming to the creation of factories—the use of technology has affected the environment. By changing how we interact with the natural world, technology has had a major impact on the course of history. As humans created new and more advanced technologies, they should become aware of how they will affect the environment.

② **Rise of Empires** The way in which empires arose is another important theme. As humans learned the advantages of cooperating with one another, civilizations arose across the globe. Many of these civilizations developed from early cities called city-states. Kingdoms and even larger empires eventually formed from these civilizations. Sometimes empires conquered other neighboring kingdoms or states in hopes of expanding their power. Today, evidence of the success of these powerful kingdoms and empires still remains.

This theme covers a wide range of topics. Some examples are:

- the development of trade networks
- artistic and architectural advancements
- the unification of smaller states into kingdoms and empires
- the prominence of patriarchal societies

③ **Growth and Changes in Societies** The organization of societies is also a key theme. Throughout history, each society has developed its own rules and customs to govern behavior and help it function. Although these structures varied from culture to culture, they also had many things in common. By examining and comparing social structures throughout history, we can get a better understanding of human life.

Among the topics covered by this theme are:

- **gender roles** and relations, including the place of women in society
- customs relating to family and **kinship**
- racial and ethnic differences and their impact on society
- division of society into social and economic classes

government

④ **Development of Political Institutions and Ideas** Another key theme is the creation of political systems and forms of government. World history has often been presented as a series of one ruler or government after another. It is much more than that. Nevertheless, political structures are an important aspect of history. The way in which people have organized and governed themselves says a great deal about human society.

Various topics fall under the theme of development of political institutions and ideas. Here are some examples:

- forms of government
- the nature and growth of kingdoms and empires, large territories controlled by a single ruler or state
- the development of nations
- the Renaissance
- the Enlightenment
- political revolts and revolutions

⑤ **Belief Systems** An additional key theme is the creation and development of belief systems. As ideas continued to develop throughout the medieval world, new philosophies and religions began to emerge. These belief systems often brought great social and political change to both the regions they originated in as well as those they eventually spread to.

Various topics fall under the theme of belief systems. Here are some examples:

- the perseverance of Jews during the Crusades
- the impact of Christianity on empirical motivations
- the spread of Islam and its affect on the world

⑥ **Interconnectedness of Societies** The last theme you'll learn about is the interconnectedness of societies. All of the new ideas, products, and advancements that were developed in the medieval world eventually reached other parts of it. Large networks of trade routes throughout the world connected the societies you'll learn about, resulting in the combining of cultures.

Various topics fall under the theme of interconnectedness of societies. Some examples are:

- the exchange of inventions and products
- the spread of religions, arts, and ideas
- the migration of people to new locations
- the practice of diplomacy among societies