

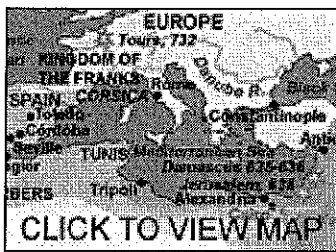
## The Crusades (Overview)

A series of armed conflicts in the Near East, the Crusades started in AD 1096 and continued on and off for several hundred years. They began when Christians from Western Europe set off to recapture the Holy Land (the city of Jerusalem and surrounding areas) from Muslims who had conquered it in the seventh century AD. Although many factors played a role in the decision to embark on the Crusades, European Christians believed that they were fighting a just war.

### Historical Context

In the first century after the death of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christian faith spread from Palestine (the Holy Land) to such nearby areas as Syria; from there, it spread throughout the Mediterranean. Over time, Christianity became the dominant religion in the areas that were once part of the Roman Empire.

In the seventh century, the Islamic faith appeared in present-day Saudi Arabia and began spreading rapidly throughout the Near East. At that time, the Byzantine Empire controlled much of the land bordering the Mediterranean Sea, but its borders began to weaken from repeated attacks by various groups, including Muslim Arabs. In 638, Arabs captured the city of Jerusalem.



During the Middle Ages, European Christians who had the means often made religious journeys, or pilgrimages, to the city of Jerusalem. For several hundred years, the Arabs who controlled Jerusalem were fairly tolerant of Christian pilgrims. However, by 1071, the Seljuk Turks, also Muslims, gained control of the city and began to make life difficult for Christians arriving there. The Byzantine Empire also felt threatened by the Turks and appealed to the Christian nations of Western Europe for assistance.

In response to that appeal, in 1095, Pope Urban II called on Christian knights to go to the aid of the Christians in the Byzantine Empire and to recapture the Holy Land from the Muslims. To make the idea more attractive, the pope offered indulgences (forgiveness of sins) to those who would fight and promised that the Church would protect a knight's family and property during his absence.

### Many Motives

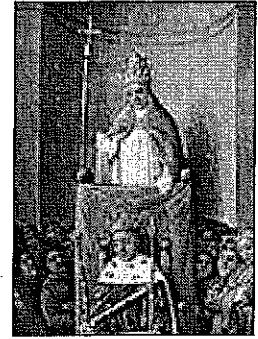
The protection of Christians and the recovery of territory from the Muslims were not the only motives for the First Crusade. From the Catholic Church's standpoint, such a glorious venture—if successful—would bring power and prestige to the Church for issuing the initial call.

Pope Urban also hoped that sending the knights off to war might help reduce the many minor conflicts taking place in Europe. In feudal Europe, increased food production and population growth meant that more nobles competed for ownership of the same land. Private wars among the nobility were widespread and devastating to the common people. The Church had tried to control the situation by declaring a so-called Truce of God, which forbade nobles from battling each other on certain days, but the truce was not very effective.

All those factors—the desire for glory, excess manpower and wealth, the need to reduce conflicts among the nobility, as well as religious fervor—contributed to the Crusades.

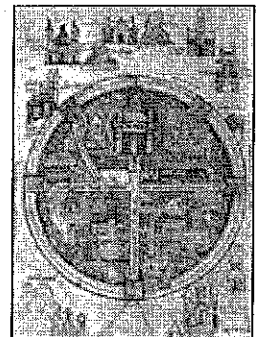
### The First Crusade

Following the call from Pope Urban, the First Crusade began in 1096. It took place in two main phases. The first phase, known as the People's Crusade or Peasants' Crusade, was probably not what the pope had in mind. Unlike noblemen, peasants could leave for years without making elaborate arrangements for their personal affairs during their absence. Led by a preacher named Peter the Hermit and a knight known as Walter the Penniless, many commoners heeded the pope's call. Untrained in warfare, disorganized, and with meager financial resources, thousands of peasants rushed toward the Byzantine Empire in the spring. Following a treacherous journey, a Muslim ambush wiped out nearly the entire army.



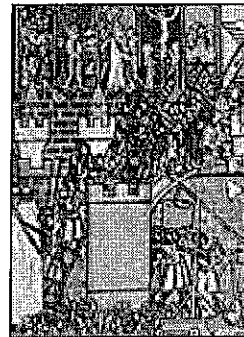
Meanwhile, the nobles had been putting their affairs in order and preparing for a long journey and extended war. Well supplied and trained, those "official" crusaders waited until the summer of 1096 to depart. Led by several French noblemen and by a representative of the pope, they arrived in April 1097 at the city of Constantinople, where Byzantine forces joined them. The combined armies defeated the Muslims at Nicaea and Antioch, and they finally captured Jerusalem in 1099.

The crusaders divided the conquered territory into four states: the county of Edessa, the county of Tripoli, the principality of Antioch, and the Kingdom of Jerusalem, each ruled by an important noble who had helped lead the crusade. The area was collectively known as the Latin States of the Crusaders. Following their military success, many of the crusaders completed a religious pilgrimage and went home. Some stayed, however, to protect and defend the Crusader States against their Muslim enemies.



### The Second Crusade

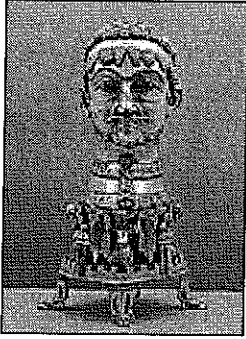
As time went on, the Crusader States required constant European resources and reinforcements because of continuous Muslim attacks. The goal of the Muslims was not so much to regain the city of Jerusalem as to remove the Christians from their territory and reunite the region under their control. It also became a matter of prestige to win a victory over the Christians. The Muslims conquered the county of Edessa in 1144.



Responding to a call by Pope Eugenius III and to effective recruiting by the influential Church leader Bernard of Clairvaux, Europeans vowed to defend the three remaining Crusader States. Led by King Louis VII of France, together with Conrad III, the Holy Roman emperor, the Second Crusade began in 1147. Despite its prestigious beginning, political disagreements between the crusaders and the Byzantine Empire, as well as poorly trained soldiers and inferior military tactics, contributed to the complete failure of the Second Crusade, which ended with a retreat in 1149.

### The Third Crusade

The defeat of the Second Crusade represented a significant victory for the Muslims. Encouraged by that success, Muslim military leaders continued to attack the Crusader States. One of them, a brilliant general known as Saladin,



destroyed the army of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1187 and gained control of most of its territory.

The Christians responded with the Third Crusade, led by King Richard the Lionhearted of England, King Philip II Augustus of France, and Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa of Germany. Frederick died before reaching the Holy Land, and most of his army dispersed and went home. Richard and Philip were bitter rivals because of a dispute over English land claims in France. In 1191, Philip returned to France (while Richard was still fighting in the Holy Land) to regain control of the disputed French lands.

Of the original leaders, Richard alone remained to battle Saladin and other Muslims until 1192. A powerful knight and legendary leader, Richard regained much of the Mediterranean coast for the Europeans, although Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Muslims.

### Other Crusades

Over the course of the next 200 years, Christians launched other crusades, not only against the Muslims in the Holy Land but also against Egypt, the Muslim Moors in Spain, non-Christians in northern Europe, and Christian heretics. Crusades continued all the way into the 1400s, but all those directed against the Holy Land were unsuccessful. By 1291, all the territories that had been won by the first crusaders had fallen under Muslim control.



ID: 1185712

[back to top](#)

### The Crusades: Discussion

1. Using what you know about religion in the Middle Ages, why do you think people were willing to risk their lives to become crusaders?
2. To what extent do you think motives other than religion drove the Crusades?
3. Later Crusades were directed not only against Muslims in the Holy Land but also against Egypt, the Muslim Moors in Spain, non-Christians in northern Europe, Christian heretics, and Jews. Why do you think the focus shifted?

## The Black Death (Overview)

The middle of the 14th century saw one of the most dramatic catastrophes in European history. Historians estimate that during a span of only a few years, between one-fourth and one-third of the population of Europe—perhaps 25 million people—died of the disease known as the plague. That history-changing event became known to later generations as the Black Death.

### The Disease

Technically, there are three forms of plague, each with its own separate symptoms. Analysis of historical accounts suggests that all three were likely present during the Black Death.

Bubonic plague, the most common form, is an infection of the lymphatic system. Symptoms include painful swelling of the lymph nodes to the size of eggs; black areas on the skin; fever, chills, and headache; muscle aches and exhaustion; and a horrible smell. Typically, it would have taken two to seven days for victims to die, and the mortality rate could have been 50%-90%.



Pneumonic plague is an infection of the respiratory system. Symptoms include coughing, coughing up blood, chest pains, shortness of breath, and high fever. It generally would have taken fewer than two days for victims to die, and the mortality rate was almost 100%.

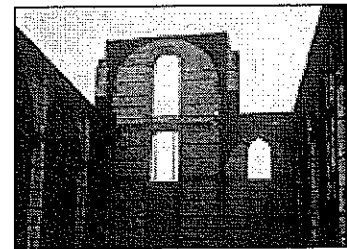
Septicemic plague, the least common form, is an infection of the circulatory system. It often involves many of the symptoms of the bubonic plague, with the addition of seizures and a tendency to bleed. It could have taken less than a day for victims to die, and the mortality rate was nearly 100%.

All three forms are caused by the same bacillus, *Yersinia pestis*. That bacterium typically lives in the bloodstream of rodents, like rats, and in the stomachs of the fleas that feed on them. Under certain conditions, fleas can transmit the plague to other mammals, including humans.

Both the bubonic and the septicemic forms are spread through fleabites from infected fleas. The pneumonic variety is directly and highly contagious between humans, via airborne particles expelled during coughing. People in the 14th century were unaware of the causes of the disease and how it spread.

### The Spread of the Black Death

It is generally believed that the first outbreak of the Black Death was in Central Asia, in areas controlled by the Mongols. From there, traveling along the caravan trade routes, it appears to have spread east into China, where it had a devastating impact, and west toward Europe.



The plague reached the Black Sea by 1346. There, it played an important role in the siege of Kaffa, a town on the north shore of the Black Sea maintained by traders from the Italian city of Genoa. The Mongol attackers, ravaged by the plague, attempted to infect the defenders by using catapults to throw dead bodies into the city. The defenders dropped the bodies into the sea but became infected nonetheless. They fled toward the Mediterranean Sea—spreading the infection as they went.

During the next three years, the plague ravaged Europe, North Africa, and the Near East. The plague hit Constantinople and Sicily in 1347. In 1348, the plague spread inland into North Africa, Italy, Greece, France, Spain, and England, and it reached the Islamic holy city of Mecca in 1349. By 1351, all parts of Europe had experienced the plague, with the exception of much of Poland.

### Immediate Impact

The impact of the Black Death varied widely from community to community, with some areas relatively lightly hit and others completely devastated. Some villages were so greatly affected that they had to be completely abandoned. Once the infection began among members of isolated groups—for example, monks or nuns in their monasteries—it might continue until most or all of them were dead.

Overall, the impact in cities seems to have been greater than in the country. In most smaller communities, the plague hit once for several months. In many of the larger cities, the plague might hit heavily in the summer or fall, die down somewhat in the winter, and then reappear the following spring.

Generally speaking, the poor suffered from the plague more than the rich. However, no group was unaffected. Those who often came into contact with the sick—particularly doctors and priests—were more likely to become infected and die, and people commonly complained that such caregivers had abandoned their duties. The lack of priests was particularly worrisome, as confession and absolution (a religious rite) were considered to be necessary for salvation.

### Reactions and Responses

People responded to the Black Death in various ways. A common complaint among contemporary writers was that people lost their natural affection for friends and family members. Some people reacted by attempting to live for the moment and experience what pleasure they could, as there was no guarantee that they would live much longer.



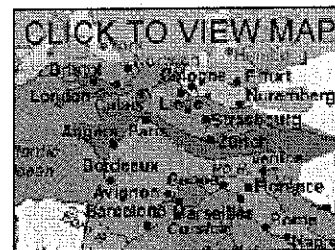
Many people saw the plague as God's punishment for human wickedness. In Germany, a religious group known as the flagellants arose in response to the plague. Traveling from town to town, they whipped themselves as an attempt to do penance. Christians also persecuted Jews in many places, based on the theory that Jews were somehow responsible for the Black Death.

Europeans sought explanations for the Black Death in astrology as well. The University of Paris issued the opinion that the plague was the result of a conjunction of the planets Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars. That opinion was widely accepted, but it did not suggest any useful measures for treating or preventing the plague. Instead, people tried to spare themselves by moving away from areas of infection, taking medicines, or burning substances that supposedly purified the air.

### Aftermath

Economically, the immediate effect of the plague was a drop in prices, as there was not nearly as much demand for goods and services. Later, however, prices rose, as a result of a lack of workers. With fewer workers, less land could be cultivated, fewer goods could be produced, and services were more valuable.

Overall, medieval society after the Black Death was likely more mobile than before. Surviving laborers could ask for more money for their services or relocate to areas where opportunities were better. The ruling classes saw those developments as socially disruptive, however. Some governments attempted to prevent those changes by enacting such laws as the Statute of Laborers in England, which fixed prices or made it illegal for laborers to relocate. Those laws led to further social unrest, as the lower classes could not take full advantage of the new opportunities they saw around them. Long-term social stresses of that sort may have contributed to later movements, like the Peasants' Revolt of 1381 in England.



Yet another result of the plague was a transfer of wealth to families and individuals who would not otherwise have possessed it, both through inheritance and through social advancement. Writers complained about the decline of manners among those "new rich."

### Conclusion

The year 1351 marked the last major outbreak of the Black Death, although local epidemics of the plague continued to occur in various locations throughout the world for the next several hundred years. Some of those outbreaks were nearly as severe as the first had been.

Historians continue to debate the extent to which the Black Death actually changed the history of Europe and how much it hastened trends that were already in motion. Whatever its interpretation, the Black Death was undoubtedly one of the largest, most widespread calamities in human history.

ID: 1185731

[back to top](#)

### The Black Death: Discussion

1. What are some of the differences between the immediate effects of the Black Death and its long-term effects? What are some reasons for those differences?
2. Why do you think medieval doctors had difficulty figuring out how to prevent the spread of the plague?
3. Outbreaks of the plague occurred periodically for many years following the Black Death. How do you think the impact of a recurring disease might be different from that of a single, catastrophic epidemic?

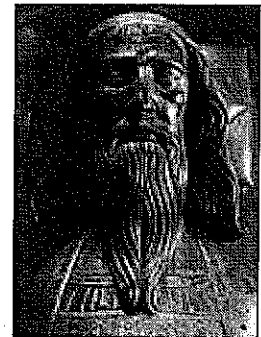
## The Hundred Years' War (Overview)

The Hundred Years' War, a series of intermittent battles fought between England and France from 1337 to 1453, was one of many destabilizing events to occur in 14th-century Europe. Set against the background of plague and such ecclesiastic controversies as the Great Schism, the Hundred Years' War drew several medieval states into the destruction wrought by the rivalry between England and France. Both nations emerged from the fray greatly transformed, more similar to the nation-states each kingdom eventually became than the late feudal states that they had been when the war began. The Hundred Years' War was also the last time that mounted knights played a significant role in European warfare. Between skilled bowmen, ever-improving siege guns, and new infantry tactics, knights on horseback slipped from their position of military preeminence into leadership roles, and ultimately, as a less exalted but still effective corollary to infantry units.

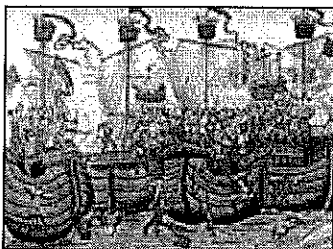
### A Question of Causes

Resulting from a complex series of opposing interests, the Hundred Years' War cannot be attributed to any one cause. England and France had long been rivals. William the Conqueror, who took the English Crown after his Norman Conquest in 1066, was not only the king of England, but as duke of Normandy he was also a vassal to the king of France. Through a couple of advantageous marriages with French nobility in the 12th century, the English Crown expanded its territory in France to include Aquitaine, Gascony, and other rich and fertile lands in the south and west. For more than 200 years, English kings squabbled with their French "overlord" about their possessions in France. That rivalry is critical to any understanding of the war that absorbed France and England in the 14th and 15th centuries.

The first set of conflicts were sparked by the dynastic crisis that followed the death of the last Capetian king of France, Charles IV. When Charles died without a male heir in 1328, one of the contenders to inherit the throne was England's king, Edward III. Edward was a nephew of Charles and a grandson of Philip IV, and therefore a legitimate successor. The French nobles, however, did not like the idea of being ruled by an English king and decided that Philip VI (a cousin of the deceased king) should sit on the throne. Edward was unhappy with this decision but decided to accept the choice of the French peers. In 1337, Philip—eager to consolidate his rule and expand his sphere of control—invaded lands that belonged to Edward.



### The Battles Begin



Philip's attacks on Edward's lands in France prompted Edward to invade France and claim his right to the French throne. This inaugurated the first phase of the war, one that saw significant English victories, on both land and sea. The naval Battle of Sluys in 1340 not only gave Edward control of the waters between the two kingdoms, but it also gave him maximum advantage on land because he did not have to worry about the French Navy attacking his shipping lines or dividing his forces.

The first major land battle of the war was the Battle of Crécy in 1346, which ended in victory for the English. After Crécy, the English marched to Calais, where they laid siege on the town, capturing it in 1347. Within a year, however, the virulent plague known as the Black Death broke out in both France and England. Hostilities decreased for a time as each side saw about one-third of its population die of the deadly disease, which ceased to

be a major health threat in 1351. In 1356, the English won another victory at the Battle of Poitiers. Led by Edward the Black Prince (the eldest son of Edward III), the English forces defeated the French attack on their position, killed thousands of French soldiers, and captured a number of French nobles, including the French king, John II, who had succeeded Philip.

The battles of Crécy and Poitiers were won in large part because of the power and effectiveness of the English longbowmen. In those battles, the mounted knight, dominant for centuries, met his match in the peasant-turned paid soldier. The French nobility gloried in chivalry, in battles between equals, and thus gave little thought to simple bowmen. England's nobles were no less chivalrous, but made good use of the common soldier as well. Moreover, smart alliances, the able Queen Philippa of Hainaut at home, and the growing sophistication of the English Parliament, all helped strengthen the English in France.



Although England had achieved several successes on the battlefield, warfare was a costly enterprise for both sides. In 1360, the two adversaries signed the Treaty of Brétigny, giving the English dominion over Aquitaine in exchange for Edward giving up his claim to the French throne.

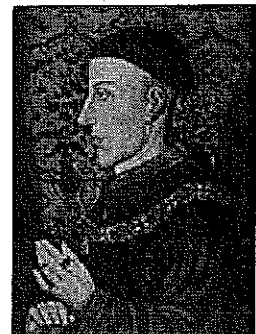
### An Uneasy Peace is Broken



The Treaty of Brétigny did not put an end to the tensions between the English and French. Not long after the signing of the treaty, further skirmishes began taking place in Brittany and along the borders of France and the lands held by the English. After gaining the throne at his father's death in 1364, Charles V of France sent out small raiding parties under the command of his able general, Bertrand du Guesclin. By employing a strategy that harassed the English while denying them the opportunity to engage in major battles and claim new lands, the French were able to regain much of the territory they had lost earlier. The English responded by conducting raids of their own, pillaging and plundering French villages.

A truce was signed in 1389, but once again the two sides could not adhere to a lasting peace. When the French king Charles VI suffered from bouts of madness and the political situation in France became unstable, the English king, Henry V, claimed his right to the French throne. In 1415, he led an invasion into France, successfully laying siege to the port town of Harfleur, followed by the Battle of Agincourt. Henry's famous victory at Agincourt once again showcased the effectiveness of English bowmen. The French had not learned from their previous defeats and unwisely attacked the well-fortified English. Their men at arms became bogged down in mud, making them vulnerable to a barrage of arrows from Henry's forces.

Other English victories followed, leading to the Treaty of Troyes (1420), whereupon it was agreed that after the death of Charles, Henry (and after his death, his successors) would be recognized as heir to the French throne. Charles disinherited his son and gave his daughter, Princess Catherine of Valois, in marriage to Henry. It appeared that the English would prevail after all, but Henry died before firmly securing the crown for himself. Into the gap stepped the French claimant to the throne, the disinherited dauphin, Charles (the future Charles VII of France).



The tide began to turn in favor of the French during the siege of Orléans. The dauphin found



an inspiring champion in a young peasant girl, Joan of Arc, who led a relief force that resulted in French forces driving back the English. In 1435, Charles VII reconciled with the duke of Burgundy, Philip III the Good, and they joined forces against the English. By the conclusion of the Battle of Castillon in 1453, the war was over, and for all of England's accomplishments early in the conflict, the English retained only Calais.

### The Transformation of Late Medieval England and France

The war, while violent and costly, had been intermittent. All told, formal engagements between the armies probably added up to only two weeks of fighting—raids, however, occurred far more often. From that point forward, the knight took on primarily a leadership role and left the bulk of the fighting to highly disciplined infantry squads. Ironically, chivalric enthusiasm reached its height in both kingdoms even as it was increasingly clear that the days of the mounted knight were waning.



Each kingdom emerged from the Hundred Years' War transformed. England spent much of the remainder of the 15th century locked in the War of the Roses, a dynastic contest between royal rivals that exasperated the English people and almost annihilated its nobility. Desirous of peace and order, the English finally found strong monarchs in the Tudors, who brought England into the early modern period not only strong, but poised to expand. France, too, had changed. Having suffered the brunt of the war, France took longer to recover. Like England, internal politics took a heavy toll, and though movements like the Jacquerie and the revolutionary rule of Étienne Marcel in Paris shook the throne during the war, they ultimately failed and ironically helped strengthen the French monarchy.

ID: 1185737

[back to top](#)

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### The Hundred Years' War: Discussion

1. What role did the earlier history of England and France play in bringing the two kingdoms to war?
2. The French were able to handle the English more effectively during the second phase of the war. Why?
3. In what ways, if any, did each kingdom emerge stronger or weaker after the Hundred Years' War?

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