Emerging Europe and the Byzantine Empire

Guide to Reading

Main Ideas
- The new European civilization was formed by the Germanic peoples, the legacy of the Romans, and the Church.
- While European monarchs began to build strong states, Byzantine rulers created an empire in the East.

Key Terms
pope, monk, feudalism, vassal, fief, common law, Magna Carta, Crusades

People to Identify
Clovis, Charlemagne, William of Normandy, Justinian, Pope Urban II

Places to Locate
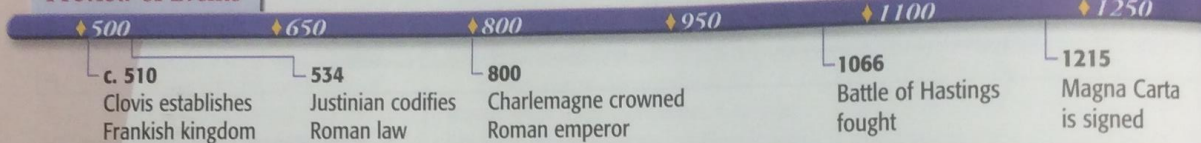England, Runnymede, Holy Roman Empire, Kiev, Jerusalem

Preview Questions
1. What led to the development of feudalism?
2. What was the impact of the Crusades?

Reading Strategy
Contrasting Information Use a table like the one below to list the differences between the systems of feudalism and empires.

Feudalism	Empires

Preview of Events

◆ 500	◆ 650	◆ 800	◆ 950	◆ 1100	◆ 1250

c. 510
Clovis establishes Frankish kingdom

534
Justinian codifies Roman law

800
Charlemagne crowned Roman emperor

1066
Battle of Hastings fought

1215
Magna Carta is signed

A medieval lord and his vassals

Voices from the Past

In 1020, Bishop Fulbert of Chartres wrote about the mutual obligations between lord and vassals:

❝[The vassal] who swears loyalty to his lord ought always to have these six things in memory: what is harmless, safe, honorable, useful, easy, practicable. *Harmless*, that is to say, that he should not injure his lord in his body; *safe*, that he should not injure him by betraying his secrets; *honorable*, that he should not injure him in his justice; *useful*, that he should not injure him in his possessions; *easy* and *practicable*, that that good which his lord is able to do easily he make not difficult, nor that which is practicable he make not impossible to him.❞

—*Readings in European History*, James Harvey Robinson, 1934

A system of lords and vassals spread over Europe after the collapse of the Carolingian Empire.

The New Germanic Kingdoms

A new European civilization came into being in western Europe after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. This new civilization was formed by the coming together of three major elements: the Germanic peoples who moved in and settled the Western Roman Empire, the legacy of the Romans, and the Christian church. By 800, this new European civilization was taking shape. Increasingly, Europe would become the center of what we call Western civilization.

European civilization emerged and developed during a period called the Middle Ages or the medieval period. It lasted from about 500 to 1500. To historians who first used the title, the Middle Ages was a middle period between the ancient world and the modern world.

By 500, the Western Roman Empire had been replaced by a number of states ruled by German kings. Only one of the German states on the European continent proved long lasting—the kingdom of the Franks. The Frankish kingdom was established by *Clovis*, a strong military leader who around 500 became the first Germanic ruler to convert to Christianity. By 510, Clovis had established a powerful Frankish kingdom that stretched from the Pyrenees in the southwest to German lands in the east (modern-day France and western Germany).

✓**Reading Check** **Identifying** What is the name of the period during which European civilization developed?

The Role of the Church

By the end of the fourth century, Christianity had become the supreme religion of the Roman Empire. As the official Roman state fell apart, the Christian church played an increasingly important role in the growth of the new European civilization.

By the fourth century, the Christian church had developed a system of organization. Local Christian communities called parishes were led by priests. A group of parishes was headed by a bishop, whose area of authority was known as a bishopric, or diocese.

Over time, one bishop—the bishop of Rome—began to claim that he was the leader of what was now called the Roman Catholic Church. Later bishops of Rome came to be known as popes (from the Latin word *papa*, "father") of the Catholic Church.

The Catholic Church developed a body of doctrine. Especially important was the church council, a meeting of representatives from the entire Christian community. Church councils defined church teachings.

Also important to the early Christian church was the role of monks. A monk is a man who pursues a life of total dedication to God. The practice of living the life of a monk is known as monasticism. In the sixth century, Saint Benedict founded a community of monks for which he wrote a set of rules. The Benedictine rule came to be used by other monastic groups. Monks were the social workers of their communities, providing schools for the young, hospitals for the sick, and hospitality for travelers. They became the new heroes of Christian civilization.

✓**Reading Check** **Describing** How was the Christian church organized?

Charlemagne and the Carolingians

In 768, a new ruler came to the throne of the Frankish kingdom. This new king was the dynamic and powerful ruler Charles the Great, or **Charlemagne.**

A medieval depiction of the crowning of Charlemagne

Charlemagne was a determined and decisive man who was highly intelligent and curious. He was a strong statesman and a pious Christian. Although unable to read or write, he was a wise patron of learning.

During his lengthy rule from 768 to 814, Charlemagne greatly expanded the territory of the Frankish kingdom and created what came to be known as the Carolingian (KAR•uh•LIN•jee•uhn) Empire. At its height, Charlemagne's empire covered much of western and central Europe. Not until the time of Napoleon Bonaparte in the nineteenth century would an empire its size be seen again in Europe.

As Charlemagne's power grew, so too did his prestige as the most powerful Christian ruler. One monk even described Charlemagne's empire as the "kingdom of Europe." In 800, Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the Romans by the pope.

Charlemagne's coronation as Roman emperor symbolized the coming together of Roman, Christian, and Germanic elements. A Germanic king had been crowned emperor of the Romans by the pope, the spiritual leader of western Christendom. A new civilization had emerged.

✓ **Reading Check** Analyzing What was the significance of Charlemagne's coronation as Roman emperor?

Feudalism

After the death of Charlemagne in 814, the Carolingian Empire that he had established began to fall apart. Rulers found it more and more difficult to defend their subjects from invaders such as the Vikings, a Germanic people from Scandinavia. Thus, people began to turn to local landed aristocrats, or nobles, to protect them. It became important to find a powerful lord who could offer protection in return for service. This led to a new political and social system called **feudalism.**

Knights and Vassals At the heart of feudalism was the idea of vassalage. In Germanic society, warriors swore an oath of loyalty to their leaders and fought for them. The leaders, in turn, took care of the warriors' needs. By the eighth century, a man who served a lord in a military capacity was known as a **vassal.**

In the eighth century, warriors on horseback were armored in coats of mail (armor made of metal links

THE WAY IT WAS

FOCUS ON EVERYDAY LIFE

The Castles of the Aristocrats

The growth of the European nobility in the High Middle Ages (1000 to 1300) was made visible by a growing number of castles scattered across the landscape. Castles varied considerably but possessed two common features: they were permanent residences for the noble family, its retainers, and servants, and they were defensible fortifications.

The earliest castles were made of wood. However, by the eleventh century, castles of stone were being built. At first, the basic castle plan had two parts. The *motte* was a man-made or natural steep-sided hill. The *bailey* was an open space next to the motte. Both motte and bailey were encircled by large stone walls. The *keep*, the central building of the castle, was built on the motte.

The keep was a large building with a number of stories constructed of thick stone walls. On the ground floor were the kitchens and stables. The basement housed storerooms for equipment and foodstuffs. Above the ground floor was the great hall. This very large room served a number of purposes.

Bodiam Castle, England

or plates). They wielded long lances that enabled them to act as battering rams. For almost five hundred years, warfare in Europe was dominated by heavily armored cavalry, or knights, as they came to be called. The knights had great social prestige and formed the backbone of the European nobility.

It was expensive to have a horse, armor, and weapons. With the breakdown of royal governments, the more powerful nobles took control of large areas of land. When these lords wanted men to fight for them, they granted each vassal a piece of land that supported the vassal and his family. Land was the most important gift a lord could give to a vassal.

The Feudal Contract By the ninth century, the grant of land made to a vassal had become known as a fief (FEEF). Vassals who held fiefs came to hold political authority within them. As the Carolingian world fell apart, the number of separate powerful lords and vassals increased. Instead of a single government, many different people were now responsible for keeping order.

Feudalism came to be characterized by a set of unwritten rules—known as the feudal contract—that determined the relationship between a lord and his vassal. The major obligation of a vassal to his lord was to perform military service, usually about 40 days a year.

✓**Reading Check** **Describing** What social and political conditions led to the establishment of feudalism?
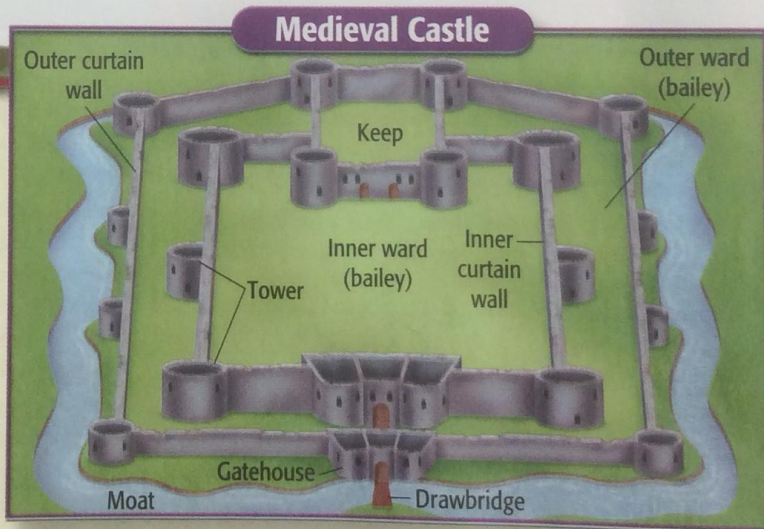
The Growth of European Kingdoms

TURNING POINT When King John of England was forced to put his seal on the Magna Carta in 1215, John recognized the rights of his nobles. This act affirmed that English monarchs had to obey the law of the land.

The feudal system put power into the hands of many different lords. Gradually, however, kings began to extend their own powers. Their actions laid the foundations for the European kingdoms that have dominated Europe ever since. One of these kingdoms—**England**—created political institutions that later influenced the formation of the democratic political system of the United States.

England in the High Middle Ages On October 14, 1066, an army of heavily armed knights under **William of Normandy** landed on the coast of England and defeated King Harold and his soldiers at the **Battle of Hastings.** William was then crowned

Here, the lord of the castle held court and received visitors. Here, too, the inhabitants of the castle ate and even slept. Smaller rooms might open off the great hall, including bedrooms with huge curtained beds with straw mattresses, latrines, and possibly a chapel.

The growing wealth of the High Middle Ages made it possible for European nobles to improve their standard of living. Nobles sought to buy more luxury goods, such as jewelry, better clothes, and exotic spices. They also built more elaborate castles with thicker walls and more buildings and towers. Rooms became better furnished and more elaborately decorated.

Medieval Castle

Outer curtain wall · Keep · Outer ward (bailey) · Inner ward (bailey) · Inner curtain wall · Tower · Gatehouse · Drawbridge · Moat

The basic architecture of a medieval castle

CONNECTING TO THE PAST

1. **Explaining** What architectural and design features supported the two basic functions of castles?

2. **Describing** What was the lifestyle of the European nobility in the High Middle Ages?

3. **Writing about History** Does a nobility exist today? Where?

Europe, 1160

Geography *Skills*

Strong monarchies developed in France and England, while Germany and Italy consisted of independent states.

1. **Interpreting Maps** Locate Runnymede. What event occurred there and why was it significant?
2. **Applying Geography Skills** Create a bar graph comparing the physical sizes of the kingdoms shown on this map.

king of England. He began combining Anglo-Saxon and Norman institutions to create a new England.

The power of the English monarchy was greatly enlarged under Henry II, who reigned from 1154 to 1189. Henry increased the number of criminal cases tried in the king's court and devised means for taking property cases from local courts to the royal courts. By expanding the power of the royal courts, Henry expanded the power of the king. In addition, because the royal courts were now found throughout England, a body of **common law**—law that was common to the whole kingdom—began to replace law codes that varied from place to place.

Many English nobles resented the ongoing growth of the king's power and rose in rebellion during the reign of King John. At **Runnymede** in 1215, John was forced to put his seal on a document of rights called the **Magna Carta,** or the Great Charter.

Feudal custom had always recognized that the relationship between king and vassals was based on mutual rights and obligations. The Magna Carta gave written recognition to that fact and was used in later years to strengthen the idea that a monarch's power was limited, not absolute.

Some provisions of the Magna Carta came to have greater significance because of the way they were later interpreted. For example, Chapter 39 reads: "No free man shall be taken or imprisoned or dispossessed, or outlawed, or banished, or in any way destroyed, . . . except by the legal judgment of his peers or by the law of the land." In 1215, the label of "free man" applied to less than half of the English population. Later this statement was applied to all. In the fourteenth century, it gave rise to trial by jury.

In the thirteenth century, during the reign of Edward I, an important institution in the development of representative government—the English Parliament—also emerged. The Parliament came to be composed of two knights from every county, two

people from every town, and all of the nobles and bishops from throughout England. Eventually, nobles and church lords formed the House of Lords; knights and townspeople, the House of Commons. The Parliament imposed taxes and passed laws.

The French Kingdom

In 843, the Carolingian Empire was divided into three sections. One, the west Frankish lands, formed the core of what would become the kingdom of France. In 987, after the death of the last Carolingian king, the west Frankish nobles chose Hugh Capet as the new king, thus establishing the Capetian (kuh•PEE•shuhn) dynasty of French kings. The Capetians had little power and controlled only the area around Paris.

The reign of King Philip II Augustus, who ruled from 1180 to 1223, was a turning point in the growth of the French monarchy. Philip waged war against the rulers of England, who also ruled a number of French territories. Philip gained control of most of these territories. In doing so, he expanded the income of the French monarchy and greatly increased its power. By 1300, France was the largest and best-governed monarchical state in Europe.

The Holy Roman Empire

In the tenth century, the powerful dukes of the Saxons became kings of the eastern Frankish kingdom (another section of the Carolingian Empire), which came to be known as Germany. The best-known Saxon king of Germany was Otto I. In return for protecting the pope, Otto I was crowned emperor of the Romans in 962. The title had not been used since the time of Charlemagne.

As leaders of a new Roman Empire, the German kings attempted to rule both German and Italian lands. Kings Frederick I and Frederick II, instead of building a strong German kingdom, tried to create a new kind of empire. Frederick I planned to get his chief revenues from Italy. He considered Italy the center of a "holy empire"— hence the name *Holy Roman Empire*. Frederick's attempt to conquer northern Italy was opposed by the pope and the cities of northern Italy, which were unwilling to become his subjects. The main goal of

The pope crowning Frederick II

Frederick II was to establish a centralized state in Italy. However, he also became involved in a losing struggle with the popes and the northern Italian cities.

By spending their time fighting in Italy, the German emperors left Germany in the hands of powerful German lords. These nobles created their own independent kingdoms. This made the German monarchy weak and incapable of maintaining a strong monarchical state. As a result, the German Holy Roman Emperor had no real power over either Germany or Italy.

Central and Eastern Europe

The Slavic peoples were originally a single people in central Europe. Gradually, they divided into three major groups: the western, southern, and eastern Slavs.

The western Slavs eventually formed the Polish and Bohemian kingdoms. The Poles and Czechs, along with the non-Slavic Hungarians, all accepted western Christianity and became part of the Roman Catholic Church and its Latin culture.

The southern Slavic peoples included the Croats, the Serbs, and the Bulgarians. The Croats remained Catholic. The other southern Slavs, as well as the eastern Slavic peoples, embraced Eastern Orthodoxy, the faith of the neighboring Byzantine Empire.

Russia

Eastern Slavic peoples had also settled in the territory of present-day Ukraine and Russia. There, beginning in the late eighth century, they began to encounter Swedish Vikings. The Vikings eventually came to dominate the native peoples. The native peoples called the Viking rulers the Rus, from which the name *Russia* is derived.

One Viking leader, Oleg, settled in **Kiev** at the beginning of the tenth century and created the Rus state known as the principality of Kiev. His successors extended their control over the eastern Slavs and expanded Kiev until it included the territory between the Baltic and Black Seas and the Danube and Volga Rivers.

Civil wars and invasions brought an end to the first Russian state in 1169. In the thirteenth century, the Mongols conquered Russia. They occupied Russian lands and required tribute from Russian princes.

One prince emerged as more powerful than the others—Alexander Nevsky, prince of Novgorod. The khan, leader of the western Mongol Empire, awarded Nevsky the title of grand-prince. Nevsky's descendants eventually became leaders of all Russia.

✓ **Reading Check** Analyzing Why is 1066 considered an important date in history?

The Byzantine Empire

During the fifth century, Germanic tribes moved into the western part of the Roman Empire and established their states. In contrast, the Roman Empire in the East, centered in Constantinople, continued to exist, although pressured by powerful Islamic forces.

The Reign of Justinian

When **Justinian** became emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire in 527, he was determined to reestablish the Roman Empire in the entire Mediterranean world. By 552, he appeared to have achieved his goals. However, only three years after Justinian's death in 565, the Lombards had conquered much of Italy, and other areas were soon lost.

Justinian's most important contribution was his codification of Roman law. The Eastern Roman Empire had inherited a vast quantity of legal materials, which Justinian wished to simplify. The result was *The Body of Civil Law.* This code of Roman laws was also used in the West and became the basis for much of the legal system of Europe.

From Eastern Roman Empire to Byzantine Empire

A serious challenge to the Eastern Roman Empire came from the rise of Islam, which unified Arab groups and created a powerful new force that swept through the Eastern Roman Empire. Islamic forces defeated an army of the Eastern Roman

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Crusades, 1096–1204

Legend:
- Christian lands, 1095
- Muslim lands, 1095
- First Crusade, 1096–1099
- Second Crusade, 1147–1149
- Third Crusade, 1189–1192
- Fourth Crusade, 1202–1204

Map labels: ATLANTIC OCEAN, North Sea, Baltic Sea, ENGLAND, London, Cologne, Paris, Rhine R., HOLY ROMAN EMPIRE, POLAND, KIEVAN RUS, FRANCE, Clairvaux, Clermont, Marseille, SPAIN, Corsica, Genoa, Pisa, Venice, HUNGARY, Danube R., ITALY, Rome, Sardinia, Sicily, BYZANTINE EMPIRE, Constantinople, ASIA MINOR, Black Sea, Caspian Sea, AFRICA, Mediterranean Sea, Crete, Cyprus, Antioch, SYRIA, THE HOLY LAND, Tyre, Acre, PALESTINE, Jerusalem, 50°N, 40°N, 30°N

▲ *Medieval illustration of a battle during the Crusades*

Geography Skills

From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, many Europeans attempted to free the Holy Land from Muslim occupation.

1. **Interpreting Maps** Trace the routes of the four crusades shown on the map. Where did each route begin and end?

2. **Applying Geography Skills** How did Italian port cities benefit from the Crusades?

Empire at Yarmuk in 636. Problems arose along the northern frontier as well, especially in the Balkans.

By the beginning of the eighth century, the Eastern Roman Empire was much smaller, consisting only of the eastern Balkans and Asia Minor. Historians call this smaller Eastern Roman Empire the **Byzantine Empire**, a unique civilization that lasted until 1453.

The Byzantine Empire was both a Greek and a Christian state. Greek, the common language, replaced Latin as the official language of the empire. At the same time, the empire was built on a Christian faith that was shared by many citizens. The Christian church of the Byzantine Empire came to be known as the Eastern Orthodox Church.

New Heights and New Problems
The Byzantine Empire recovered and even expanded, due to the efforts of a new dynasty of emperors known as the Macedonians, who ruled from 867 to 1081. By 1025, the Byzantine Empire was the largest it had been since the beginning of the seventh century.

The Byzantine Empire continued to face threats from abroad, however. The greatest challenge came from the advance of the Seljuk Turks, who had moved into Asia Minor. In 1071, a Turkish army defeated Byzantine forces at Manzikert. Lacking the resources to undertake new campaigns against the Turks, Emperor Alexius I turned to Europe for military aid.

✓**Reading Check** **Evaluating** How did the rise of Islam affect the Eastern Roman Empire?

The Crusades

From the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries, European Christians carried out a series of military expeditions known as the Crusades. The push for the Crusades came when the Byzantine emperor Alexius I asked the Europeans for help against the Seljuk Turks, who were Muslims. **Pope Urban II**, who responded to the request, saw an opportunity to provide papal leadership for a great cause. That cause was rallying the warriors of Europe for the liberation of **Jerusalem** and the Holy Land (Palestine) from the infidels or unbelievers—the Muslims.

The First Crusade was the only successful one. The crusaders captured Jerusalem in June 1099. After further conquests, the crusaders organized four Latin crusader states. Surrounded by Muslims, these crusader kingdoms depended on Italian cities for supplies from Europe.

It was not easy for the crusader kingdoms to maintain themselves. By the 1120s, the Muslims had begun to strike back. In 1187, the Holy City of Jerusalem fell to Muslim forces under Saladin.

Did the Crusades have much effect on European civilization? Historians disagree. The Crusades certainly benefited some Italian port cities, especially Genoa, Pisa, and Venice. Even without the Crusades, however, Italian merchants would have pursued new trade contacts with the Eastern world.

✓**Reading Check** **Describing** What was the purpose of the Crusades in the view of European Christians?

SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

1. **Define** pope, monk, feudalism, vassal, fief, common law, Magna Carta, Crusades.

2. **Identify** Clovis, Charlemagne, William of Normandy, Battle of Hastings, Justinian, *The Body of Civil Law*, Byzantine Empire, Pope Urban II.

3. **Locate** England, Runnymeade, Holy Roman Empire, Kiev, Jerusalem.

4. **Describe** the role of monks in the Christian church.

5. **List** Justinian's accomplishments.

Critical Thinking

6. **Explain** What is vassalage and what is its place in the system of feudalism?

7. **Organizing Information** Use a chart to identify key achievements of monarchs in England and France.

Monarch/ Country	Achievements
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

Analyzing Visuals

8. **Examine** the painting of the pope crowning Frederick II on page 121. How did the struggle between German emperors and the popes impact the Holy Roman Empire?

Writing About History

9. **Informative Writing** Imagine that you are a journalist attending a meeting of the first English Parliament. What questions would you ask? Write a newsletter for people of your town explaining what happened.