



Empires in the Middle Ages

Lesson 5: Towns in the Middle Ages



Chapter 4 “Merchants, Markets, and Mud: Towns in the Middle Ages”

Vocabulary 5.1

Vocabulary for “Merchants, Markets, and Mud: Towns in the Middle Ages”

1. **fuel**, *v.* to give strength to or cause something to happen (**fueled**) (30)
2. **merchant**, *n.* someone who buys and sells things; the owner of a store (**merchants**) (30)
3. **emerge**, *v.* to become known or come into existence (**emerged**) (30)
4. **thrive**, *v.* to grow and succeed (31)
5. **hustle and bustle**, *n.* a great deal of activity and noise (31)
6. **curfew**, *n.* an order or law requiring people to be in their homes at a certain time, usually at night (33)
7. **tavern**, *n.* a place where people can get drinks and a meal or sleep while traveling (**taverns**) (34)
8. **apprentice**, *n.* a person who learns a skill or trade by working with a skilled craftsman for a period of time, usually for no pay (**apprenticeship**) (34)
9. **advise**, *v.* to give a suggestion about how something should be done (36)

Chapter 4 “Merchants, Markets, and Mud: Towns in the Middle Ages”

The BIG Question

How did the growth of trade during the Middle Ages affect
the way people lived?

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Chapter 4

Merchants, Markets, and Mud:

Towns in the Middle Ages

THE BIG QUESTION
How did the growth of trade during the Middle Ages affect the way people lived?

It is raining again! You stand in a puddle on the edge of a narrow street. You have just entered town through one of two gates. The gates are the only ways in and out of this walled town. Inside the walls, tiny townhouses stand side-by-side. As you move through the crowd, you spot rats scurrying about, feeding on discarded trash. Nearby, you hear the varied cries of people selling fruits, vegetables, eggs, and pies. It is market day and people have set up their stalls in the town square.

As you make your way through the muddy streets, you hear the sound of church bells. They ring out to sound the hour and to call people to church.



Metalworker's stall in medieval market

You have just caught a glimpse of a town in Europe during the late Middle Ages.



Streets in medieval towns were often crowded and muddy.

While reading,
complete activity
page 5.2!

As a class, we will also
create a T-chart to
compare the positive
and negative aspects of
living in a town during
the Middle Ages.

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In the early part of the Middle Ages, most people lived in the countryside. Between the years 1000 and 1350 CE, **fueled** by trade, towns began to grow. New jobs **emerged**, and, as a result, more and more people left the countryside to live and work in towns.



Peasants farming in the countryside

With this growth in trade, an increased number of people became involved in commerce, or business. As a result, a class of people, called the middle class, grew in importance. **Merchants** and craftsmen were part of the middle class. Towns grew as the middle class created successful businesses, and therefore jobs. Some merchants became rich and influential members of town communities.



Merchants and artisans sold goods in town markets.

To protect their businesses, merchants established guilds in towns throughout Europe. Guilds were organizations made up of merchants. Guilds controlled wages as well as the price and quality of the goods the merchants sold.

**Activity page 5.2*

Where did most people live in the early part of the Middle Ages?

Where did some people move between 1000 CE and 1300 CE?

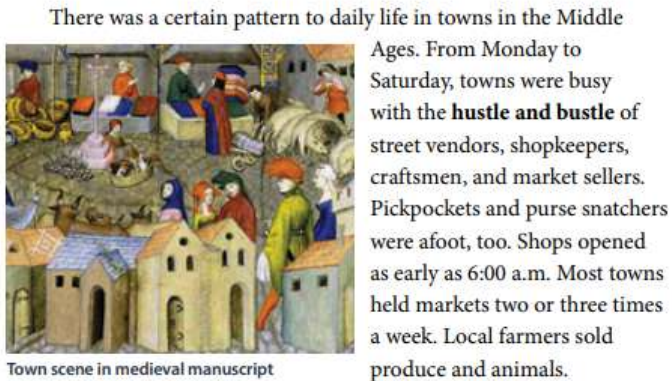
How did trade change where and how people lived during the Middle Ages?

As more people became involved in trade and commerce, what group grew in importance?

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Not only did merchants **thrive**, so too did skilled craftsmen, such as carpenters, papermakers, glassmakers, and blacksmiths. Skilled craftsmen were also important members of town communities. They made and sold their goods in the towns in which they lived and worked. Just like merchants, skilled craftsmen protected their businesses by forming guilds. Only highly skilled craftsmen were invited to join these guilds. Many years of training went into becoming a skilled craftsman.

Medieval Craftsmen



Town scene in medieval manuscript

There was a certain pattern to daily life in towns in the Middle Ages. From Monday to Saturday, towns were busy with the **hustle and bustle** of street vendors, shopkeepers, craftsmen, and market sellers. Pickpockets and purse snatchers were afoot, too. Shops opened as early as 6:00 a.m. Most towns held markets two or three times a week. Local farmers sold produce and animals.

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*Activity page 5.2

What was the connection between towns
in the Middle Ages and local lords?



Charters such as this one from Bedford, England, outlined certain rights.

Towns were not outside the control of the local lord. Merchants and craftsmen

usually paid lords in the form of money or goods. However, in exchange for money or goods, many lords granted towns special charters. The charters allowed wealthy and influential townspeople the right to make their own laws. Over time, this new decision-making process changed the feudal system.

With a growing economy, a banking system began to develop. The increasingly wealthy churches in towns created schools called universities. Places such as Oxford and Cambridge in England, and Paris in France, became important centers of learning.



Construction on the chapel at Oxford University's Merton College began in the 1200s.

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It was not long before many European towns and cities became terribly overcrowded. People lived in small houses crowded together.



Rats spread disease in towns.

The towns and cities were also disease-ridden. Rats scurrying about helped spread disease. Unless you lived in a castle, you did not have a toilet inside your home. Instead, people used chamber pots and threw the contents into the streets!

Local water supplies, polluted with the waste that was discarded daily, carried disease. Sickness and disease were common. The Black Death spread easily in such conditions.

As they did in the countryside, people in towns cooked on small fires inside their homes. Fires frequently broke out and were difficult to control. Townspeople were required to keep buckets of water outside their homes—just in case.

Many Middle Age towns were walled. People entering or leaving did so through gates. Often a toll, or fee, was charged to enter a town. A toll collector stood at the gate to collect the fee. The tolls were either paid in money or in goods. Gates were designed to keep criminals out, or if necessary, to lock criminals in so that they could be caught. There was no organized police force, but instead there were watchmen. Any member of the public could be asked to help catch an escaping criminal. The town gates were locked at night when the **curfew** bell sounded.

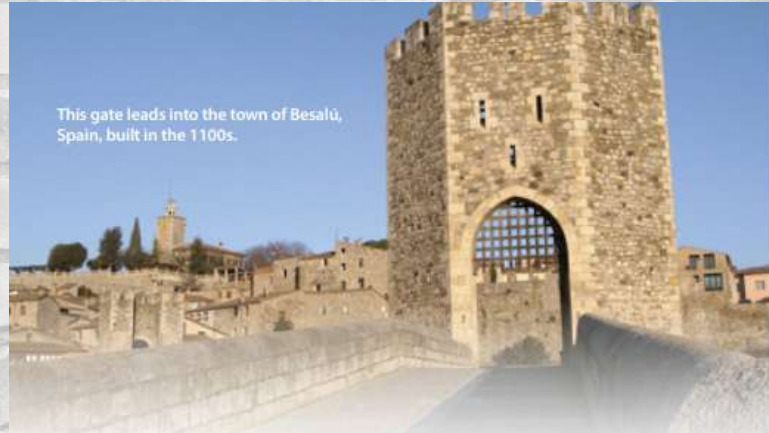


Fires spread quickly in medieval towns.

**Activity page 5.2*

List at least two problems that emerged because of people moving into towns during the Middle Ages.

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This gate leads into the town of Besalú, Spain, built in the 1100s.

Originally, curfew bells rang to inform those in the **taverns** that it was time to leave. However, they soon became a signal to everyone that it was time to go home.

If You Were an Apprentice Craftsman

Just like the boys who go off to train to be knights, you, too, are sent away at an early age. Your family arranges your training. You must live in the home of a master, or highly skilled, craftsman. It is unlikely that you will return home again during your **apprenticeship** years.



Apprentice blacksmith assisting his master



A journeyman blacksmith continued to work for his master.

you are paid by your master each day for your work. Usually, you continue to work for your master as an employee. After several years as an employee, you might take the next step in your career. You might be ready to submit a piece of your best work, called your masterpiece, to the guild for approval. If the guild accepts your work, you finally become a master craftsman. You might even be able to open your own shop with your name above the door!

Your training will take many years to complete. You will not receive payment for any of the work you do. During this time, you are part of your master's household. You live in his home or shop. You usually eat with his family. Your new family provides the clothes you wear. Even if you are homesick, or sad, you have to obey your master.

After a specified period of time, you advance from being an apprentice to becoming a journeyman. As a journeyman,



A master blacksmith might open his own shop.

***Activity page 5.2**

Put the following three steps into the order in which they take place: journeyman, master craftsman, apprentice.

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Women in the Middle Ages

Women in the Middle Ages had few legal rights. However, a small number of women in positions of power had significant influence. For example, women who became queens were often in a position to **advise** their husbands and sons, the kings and princes. A lord's widow who did not have sons could manage her deceased husband's land, and make important decisions. Women could become skilled in a particular craft, and some trained to be merchants. Other women joined the Church and became nuns. Many women worked alongside their husbands in the fields. Regardless of whether they were part of the privileged class or were serfs, as important members of their households, women managed their families' daily needs.

Two interesting women from this time period were Empress Matilda and Abbess Hildegard of Bingen.

Empress Matilda lived during the 1100s and was the daughter of King Henry I

of England. She was involved in leading an army against an English king. She escaped capture and went to France. She was also the mother of King Henry II of England.



Empress Matilda,
daughter of Henry I
of England



Abbess Hildegard
of Bingen

Abbess Hildegard was a writer and composer who lived during the 1100s. She wrote about many different subjects, including philosophy, science, and medicine. She also developed an alternative English alphabet.

**Activity page 5.2*

You read that women in the Middle Ages had few legal rights. However, regardless of whether they were privileged or not, all women had a similar role. What role did women share?

Which statement from the text best supports the answer to Part A?

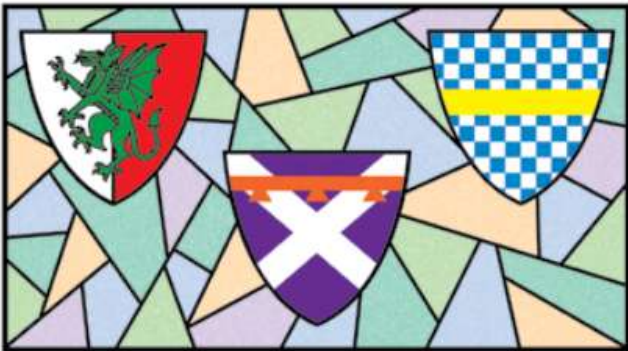
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Medieval Musings

1. In the Middle Ages, townspeople tried to avoid drinking water because it was so polluted. What did they drink instead? (Clue: It's a drink made from grain.)
2. In the Middle Ages, people created last names to describe the job they did. What did men with the last name *Shoemaker* or *Cooper* do?

Letter Quest

Find the letter in this stained-glass window and record it on Activity Page 2.3.



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Activity Page 5.4

Merchants, Markets, and Mud: Towns in the Middle Ages

Answer the following questions in complete sentences.

1. What were two positive things about life in a town in the Middle Ages?

Page(s) _____

2. What were two negative things about life in a town in the Middle Ages?

Page(s) _____

Word Work - *Fuel*

From the Text

“Between the years 1000 CE and 1350 CE, *fueled* by trade, towns began to grow.

Definition

To give strength to or cause something to happen

Part of Speech

Verb

Sentence

The teacher *fueled* her students’ enthusiasm for science with interesting experiments and field trips.

Word Work - ***Fuel***

Decide which item ***fueled***, or gave strength to, the other item.

Cold weather AND my decision to wear gloves to school

Word Work - ***Fuel***

Decide which item ***fueled***, or gave strength to, the other item.

Decision to become a veterinarian AND the boy's love of animals

Word Work - ***Fuel***

Decide which item ***fueled***, or gave strength to, the other item.

Decision to attend a concert AND my family's love of music

Word Work - ***Fuel***

Decide which item ***fueled***, or gave strength to, the other item.

Getting a new puppy for her birthday AND Maria's happiness

Word Work - ***Fuel***

Decide which item ***fueled***, or gave strength to, the other item.

The football team's big win AND the players' ability to work together

Writing – Informative Paragraph- *Serfs*

ELEMENTS OF AN INFORMATIVE PARAGRAPH POSTER	
Elements of an Informative Paragraph:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• topic sentence (introduces what you will describe)• two or three detail sentences (uses five senses/sensory details and vivid language)• concluding sentence (emphasizes the importance of topic from topic sentence)	
A good topic sentence states the main point of your paragraph.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• specific subject• specific attitude or feeling about the topic/why it is important enough to write about	
Good Detail Sentences Include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• sensory details: use "showing sentences" not "telling sentences"• vivid language/picture in mind• setting of topic/people's feelings toward topic	
A Good Concluding Sentence:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• retells topic sentence in a different way• leaves reader with a BAM/zinger/something memorable	

Writing – Topic Sentence

A good topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph.

- During the Middle Ages, serfs worked on the lord's land.
- In Europe in the Middle Ages, serfs were controlled by powerful lords.
- In medieval Europe, the majority of people were serfs and had little power.

Writing – Detail Sentences

- There are 5 categories on the graphic organizer. Pick the top 3 most interesting categories – the ones you have the most information about – to transform into detail sentences.
- Your notes on the graphic organizer are paraphrased fragments. Now you must transform them into sentences!
- A sentence needs a subject (who or what) and a predicate (what the subject is doing).

Writing – Transition Words

Transition words and phrases are helpful for making the sentences sound good together in a paragraph.

- In addition,
- Also,
- For example,

Writing – Concluding Sentence

A concluding sentence retells the topic sentence in a different way.

It should be something that makes the reader remember the topic of the paragraph.

- That is why serfs were the least powerful members of medieval society.
- As you can see, serfs had less power than lords.
- To sum it up, the serfs' lives were controlled by the lord.

Writing – Rubric

Activity Page 5.3

Informative Paragraph Rubric

	Exemplary	Strong	Developing	Beginning
Introduction	Sentence clearly expresses a big idea about the topic	Sentence states the topic	Sentence loosely relates to the topic	Sentence does not relate to the topic
Body	All details in supporting sentences are presented logically and incorporate vivid, showing language	Most details in supporting sentences are presented logically	Some details in supporting sentences are presented logically	Few or no details in supporting sentences are presented logically
Conclusion	Sentence restates the topic in a different way, leaving the reader with a BAM/zinger/something memorable	Sentence restates the topic	Sentence loosely relates to the topic	Sentence does not relate to the topic
Structure of the piece	All facts relate closely to the topic	Most facts relate to the topic	Some facts relate to the topic	Few or no details relate to the topic
	All information has been paraphrased	Most information has been paraphrased	Some information has been paraphrased	Little or no information has been paraphrased