Medieval Turning Points

Trace how movement, power, and opportunity changed Europe

SS24.8.8 "Analyze the social, political, and economic changes leading up to the Renaissance and Reformation in later medieval Europe and surrounding regions. 8a Explain the political and cultural consequences of the Crusades, the Reconquista..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two routes people or disease traveled, circle two shifts in power, and number three examples of women's work or influence so you can trace how medieval society changed.

A Changing Medieval World

1. During the Crusades, European armies traveled to the eastern Mediterranean. These wars strengthened some kings and increased European contact with goods and ideas from Muslim societies, but also deepened hostility toward Jews and Muslims. On the Iberian Peninsula, the Reconquista ended in 1492 when Christian rulers took Granada. Spain's rulers pressed religious unity; the Spanish Inquisition, established before Granada fell, investigated suspected religious dissent, often targeting converted Jews and Muslims. Meanwhile, the Ottoman Empire captured Constantinople in 1453, gaining a major trade crossroads and changing the balance of power.

2. Bubonic plague also crossed borders. In the 1300s, it spread from Asia along trade routes toward the Black Sea. Merchant ships brought infected fleas and rats to Mediterranean ports, and the disease moved across Europe. Plague killed a large share of the population. With fewer workers, some survivors demanded higher pay or left manors for towns. Landowners offered better terms to keep laborers. In towns, skilled workers and merchants gained opportunities, helping a growing middle class. These changes weakened parts of the feudal system and shifted economic power toward workers and townspeople.

3. Women also shaped medieval life, though laws and customs often limited their choices. Many farm women raised food and managed households, while some town women sold goods or worked in family workshops. Noblewomen sometimes governed estates when male relatives were away. Eleanor of Aquitaine ruled lands in France and England and helped shape royal alliances. Hildegard of Bingen, a German abbess, wrote music and works on religion and nature. Christine de Pizan wrote books defending women's abilities. Their work shows that women influenced politics and culture even when most offices were closed to them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Crusades and the Ottoman capture of Constantinople each change power or cultural contact?

2. How did the Reconquista and the Spanish Inquisition change political or religious life on the Iberian Peninsula?

3. Trace the plague's path from Asia to Europe. How did its effects help a middle class grow?

4. Compare one woman's political contribution with another woman's cultural contribution from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence museum label explaining how late medieval changes could set the stage for new ideas in the Renaissance. Connect the effects of two different events in the passage, include one named woman's contribution, and identify both an economic and a cultural change.

ANSWER KEY

Medieval Turning Points

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.8

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two routes people or disease traveled, circle two shifts in power, and number three examples of women's work or influence so you can trace how medieval society changed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Crusades and the Ottoman capture of Constantinople each change power or cultural contact?	**The Crusades strengthened some kings and increased contact with goods and ideas from Muslim societies. The Ottoman capture gave the empire a major trade crossroads and changed the balance of power.**
2	How did the Reconquista and the Spanish Inquisition change political or religious life on the Iberian Peninsula?	**Christian rulers took Granada, ending the Reconquista. Spain's rulers pressed religious unity, and the Inquisition investigated suspected dissent, often targeting converted Jews and Muslims.**
3	Trace the plague's path from Asia to Europe. How did its effects help a middle class grow?	**The plague spread along trade routes toward the Black Sea, then reached Mediterranean ports on merchant ships and moved across Europe. Deaths reduced the workforce, helping some workers gain better pay and giving skilled workers and merchants more opportunities.**
4	Compare one woman's political contribution with another woman's cultural contribution from the passage.	**Eleanor of Aquitaine shaped royal alliances through her rule in France and England. Christine de Pizan contributed to culture by writing books defending women's abilities. Hildegard of Bingen's writing and music are also valid cultural examples.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Crusades increased European contact with ideas from Muslim societies, a cultural change despite the wars' violence. Plague spread along trade routes and killed many people in Europe. Worker shortages helped survivors gain higher pay, shifting economic power and helping a middle class grow. Christine de Pizan defended women's abilities in her books, adding a woman's voice to discussions about society. Together, wider contact with ideas and changes in who held economic power could help set the stage for Renaissance thinking.

For the museum label, accept other passage-supported connections between two events, a named woman's contribution, and the required economic and cultural changes. Students should present the Renaissance connection as a possible result, not claim that one event alone caused it.