What freedoms would you give up for protection?

You are living in the countryside of western Europe during the 1100s. Like about 90 percent of the population, you are a peasant working the land. Your family’s hut is located in a small village on your lord’s estate. The lord provides all your basic needs, including housing, food, and protection. Especially important is his protection from invaders who repeatedly strike Europe.

1. For safety, peasants retreat behind the castle walls during attacks.

2. Peasants owe their lord two or three days’ labor every week farming his land.

3. This peasant feels that the right to stay on his lord’s land is more important than his freedom to leave.

4. Peasants cannot marry without their lord’s consent.

EXAMINING the ISSUES

• What is secure about your world?
• How is your life limited?

We will answer these questions for our warm up tomorrow.
Charlemagne Unites Germanic Kingdoms

MAIN IDEA

EMPIRE BUILDING Many Germanic kingdoms that succeeded the Roman Empire were reunited under Charlemagne’s empire.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

Charlemagne spread Christian civilization through Northern Europe, where it had a permanent impact.

SETTING THE STAGE

The gradual decline of the Roman Empire ushered in an era of European history called the Middle Ages, or the medieval period. It spanned the years from about 500 to 1500. During these centuries, a new society slowly emerged. It had roots in: (1) the classical heritage of Rome, (2) the beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church, and (3) the customs of various Germanic tribes.

Invasions of Western Europe

In the fifth century, Germanic invaders overran the western half of the Roman Empire (see map on page 351). Repeated invasions and constant warfare caused a series of changes that altered the economy, government, and culture:

• Disruption of Trade Merchants faced invasions from both land and sea. Their businesses collapsed. The breakdown of trade destroyed Europe’s cities as economic centers. Money became scarce.

• Downfall of Cities With the fall of the Roman Empire, cities were abandoned as centers of administration.

• Population Shifts As Roman centers of trade and government collapsed, nobles retreated to the rural areas. Roman cities were left without strong leadership. Other city dwellers also fled to the countryside, where they grew their own food. The population of western Europe became mostly rural.

The Decline of Learning

The Germanic invaders who stormed Rome could not read or write. Among Romans themselves, the level of learning sank sharply as more and more families left for rural areas. Few people except priests and other church officials were literate. Knowledge of Greek, long important in Roman culture, was almost lost. Few people could read Greek works of literature, science, and philosophy. The Germanic tribes, though, had a rich oral tradition of songs and legends. But they had no written language.

Loss of a Common Language

As German-speaking peoples mixed with the Roman population, Latin changed. While it was still an official language, it was no longer understood. Different dialects developed as new words and phrases became part of everyday speech. By the 800s, French, Spanish, and other Roman-based languages had evolved from Latin. The development of various languages mirrored the continued breakup of a once-unified empire.
Germanic Kingdoms Emerge
In the years of upheaval between 400 and 600, small Germanic kingdoms replaced Roman provinces. The borders of those kingdoms changed constantly with the fortunes of war. But the Church as an institution survived the fall of the Roman Empire. During this time of political chaos, the Church provided order and security.

The Concept of Government Changes
Along with shifting boundaries, the entire concept of government changed. Loyalty to public government and written law had unified Roman society. Family ties and personal loyalty, rather than citizenship in a public state, held Germanic society together. Unlike Romans, Germanic peoples lived in small communities that were governed by unwritten rules and traditions.

Every Germanic chief led a band of warriors who had pledged their loyalty to him. In peacetime, these followers lived in their lord’s hall. He gave them food, weapons, and treasure. In battle, warriors fought to the death at their lord’s side. They considered it a disgrace to outlive him. But Germanic warriors felt no obligation to obey a king they did not even know. Nor would they obey an official sent to collect taxes or administer justice in the name of an emperor they had never met. The Germanic stress on personal ties made it impossible to establish orderly government for large territories.

Germans Adopt Christianity
Politics played a key role in spreading Christianity. By 600, the Church, with the help of Frankish rulers, had converted many Germanic peoples. These new converts had settled in Rome’s former lands. Missionaries also spread Christianity. These religious travelers often risked their lives to bring religious beliefs to other lands. During the 300s and 400s, they worked among the Germanic and Celtic groups that bordered the Roman Empire. In southern Europe, the fear of coastal attacks by Muslims also spurred many people to become Christians in the 600s.

Monasteries, Convents, and Manuscripts
To adapt to rural conditions, the Church built religious communities called monasteries. There, Christian men called monks gave up their private possessions and devoted their lives to serving God. Women who followed this way of life were called nuns and lived in convents.
Charlemagne became emperor when his father, Pepin the Short, died in 768. He left a greatly strengthened Frankish kingdom to his two sons, Carloman and Charles. After Carloman’s death in 771, Charles, who was known as Charlemagne (SHAH•ruh•MA YN), or Charles the Great, ruled the kingdom. An imposing figure, he stood six feet four inches tall. His admiring secretary, a monk named Einhard, described Charlemagne’s achievements:

**PRIMARY SOURCE**

[Charlemagne] was the most potent prince with the greatest skill and success in different countries during the forty-seven years of his reign. Great and powerful as was the realm of Franks, Karl [Charlemagne] received from his father Pippin, he nevertheless so splendidly enlarged it ... that he almost doubled it.

EINHARD, Life of Charlemagne

**Charlemagne Extends Frankish Rule** Charlemagne built an empire greater than any known since ancient Rome. Each summer he led his armies against enemies that surrounded his kingdom. He fought Muslims in Spain and tribes from other...
Germanic kingdoms. He conquered new lands to both the south and the east. Through these conquests, Charlemagne spread Christianity. He reunited western Europe for the first time since the Roman Empire. By 800, Charlemagne’s empire was larger than the Byzantine Empire. He had become the most powerful king in western Europe.

In 800, Charlemagne traveled to Rome to crush an unruly mob that had attacked the pope. In gratitude, Pope Leo III crowned him emperor. The coronation was historic. A pope had claimed the political right to confer the title “Roman Emperor” on a European king. This event signaled the joining of Germanic power, the Church, and the heritage of the Roman Empire.

**Charlemagne Leads a Revival** Charlemagne strengthened his royal power by limiting the authority of the nobles. To govern his empire, he sent out royal agents. They made sure that the powerful landholders, called counts, governed their counties justly. Charlemagne regularly visited every part of his kingdom. He also kept a close watch on the management of his huge estates—the source of Carolingian wealth and power. One of his greatest accomplishments was the encouragement of learning. He surrounded himself with English, German, Italian, and Spanish scholars. For his many sons and daughters and other children at the court, Charlemagne opened a palace school. He also ordered monasteries to open schools to train future monks and priests.

**Charlemagne’s Heirs** A year before Charlemagne died in 814, he crowned his only surviving son, Louis the Pious, as emperor. Louis was a devoutly religious man but an ineffective ruler. He left three sons: Lothair (loh•THAIR), Charles the Bald, and Louis the German. They fought one another for control of the Empire. In 843, the brothers signed the Treaty of Verdun, dividing the empire into three kingdoms. As a result, Carolingian kings lost power and central authority broke down. The lack of strong rulers led to a new system of governing and landholding—feudalism.
Feudalism in Europe

**POWER AND AUTHORITY**
Feudalism, a political and economic system based on land-holding and protective alliances, emerges in Europe.

**WHY IT MATTERS NOW**
The rights and duties of feudal relationships helped shape today’s forms of representative government.

**TERMS & NAMES**
- lord
- fief
- vassal
- knight
- serf
- manor
- tithe

**SETTING THE STAGE**
After the Treaty of Verdun, Charlemagne’s three feuding grandsons broke up the kingdom even further. Part of this territory also became a battleground as new waves of invaders attacked Europe. The political turmoil and constant warfare led to the rise of European feudalism, which, as you read in Chapter 2, is a political and economic system based on land ownership and personal loyalty.

**Invaders Attack Western Europe**
From about 800 to 1000, invasions destroyed the Carolingian Empire. Muslim invaders from the south seized Sicily and raided Italy. In 846, they sacked Rome. Magyar invaders struck from the east. Like the earlier Huns and Avars, they terrorized Germany and Italy. And from the north came the fearsome Vikings.

*The Vikings Invade from the North*
The Vikings set sail from Scandinavia (SKAN-duh•NAY•vee•uh), a wintry, wooded region in Northern Europe. (The region is now the countries of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.) The Vikings, also called Northmen or Norsemen, were a Germanic people. They worshiped warlike gods and took pride in nicknames like Eric Bloodaxe and Thorfinn Skullsplitter.

The Vikings carried out their raids with terrifying speed. Clutching swords and heavy wooden shields, these helmeted seafarers beached their ships, struck quickly, and then moved out to sea again. They were gone before locals could mount a defense. Viking warships were awe-inspiring. The largest of these long ships held 300 warriors, who took turns rowing the ship’s 72 oars. The prow of each ship swept grandly upward, often ending with the carved head of a sea monster. A ship might weigh 20 tons when fully loaded. Yet, it could sail in a mere three feet of water. Rowing up shallow creeks, the Vikings looted inland villages and monasteries.
The Vikings were not only warriors but also traders, farmers, and explorers. They ventured far beyond western Europe. Vikings journeyed down rivers into the heart of Russia, to Constantinople, and even across the icy waters of the North Atlantic. A Viking explorer named Leif (leef) Ericson reached North America around 1000, almost 500 years before Columbus. About the same time, the Viking reign of terror in Europe faded away. As Vikings gradually accepted Christianity, they stopped raiding monasteries. Also, a warming trend in Europe’s climate made farming easier in Scandinavia. As a result, fewer Scandinavians adopted the seafaring life of Viking warriors.

**Magyars and Muslims Attack from the East and South** As Viking invasions declined, Europe became the target of new assaults. The Magyars, a group of nomadic people, attacked from the east, from what is now Hungary. Superb horsemen, the Magyars swept across the plains of the Danube River and invaded western Europe in the late 800s. They attacked isolated villages and monasteries. They overran northern Italy and reached as far west as the Rhineland and Burgundy. The Magyars did not settle conquered land. Instead, they took captives to sell as slaves.

The Muslims struck from the south. They began their encroachments from their strongholds in North Africa, invading through what are now Italy and Spain. In the 600s and 700s, the Muslim plan was to conquer and settle in Europe. By the 800s and 900s, their goal was also to plunder. Because the Muslims were expert seafarers, they were able to attack settlements on the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. They also struck as far inland as Switzerland.

The invasions by Vikings, Magyars, and Muslims caused widespread disorder and suffering. Most western Europeans lived in constant danger. Kings could not
effectively defend their lands from invasion. As a result, people no longer looked to a central ruler for security. Instead, many turned to local rulers who had their own armies. Any leader who could fight the invaders gained followers and political strength.

**A New Social Order: Feudalism**

In 911, two former enemies faced each other in a peace ceremony. Rollo was the head of a Viking army. Rollo and his men had been plundering the rich Seine (sayn) River valley for years. Charles the Simple was the king of France but held little power. Charles granted the Viking leader a huge piece of French territory. It became known as Northmen’s land, or Normandy. In return, Rollo swore a pledge of loyalty to the king.

**Feudalism Structures Society** The worst years of the invaders’ attacks spanned roughly 850 to 950. During this time, rulers and warriors like Charles and Rollo made similar agreements in many parts of Europe. The system of governing and landholding, called feudalism, had emerged in Europe. A similar feudal system existed in China under the Zhou Dynasty, which ruled from around the 11th century B.C. until 256 B.C. Feudalism in Japan began in A.D. 1192 and ended in the 19th century.

The feudal system was based on rights and obligations. In exchange for military protection and other services, a lord, or landowner, granted land called a fief. The person receiving a fief was called a vassal. Charles the Simple, the lord, and Rollo, the vassal, showed how this two-sided bargain worked. Feudalism depended on the control of land.

**The Feudal Pyramid** The structure of feudal society was much like a pyramid. At the peak reigned the king. Next came the most powerful vassals—wealthy landowners such as nobles and bishops. Serving beneath these vassals were knights. Knights were mounted horsemen who pledged to defend their lords’ lands in exchange for fiefs. At the base of the pyramid were landless peasants who toiled in the fields. (See Analyzing Key Concepts on next page.)

**Social Classes Are Well Defined** In the feudal system, status determined a person’s prestige and power. Medieval writers classified people into three groups: those who fought (nobles and knights), those who prayed (men and women of the Church), and those who worked (the peasants). Social class was usually inherited.

In Europe in the Middle Ages, the vast majority of people were peasants. Most peasants were serfs. Serfs were people who could not lawfully leave the place where they were born. Though bound to the land, serfs were not slaves. Their lords could not sell or buy them. But what their labor produced belonged to the lord.

**Manors: The Economic Side of Feudalism**

The manor was the lord’s estate. During the Middle Ages, the manor system was the basic economic arrangement. The manor system rested on a set of rights and obligations between a lord and his serfs. The lord provided the serfs with housing, farmland, and protection from bandits. In return, serfs tended the lord’s lands, cared for his animals, and performed other tasks to maintain the estate. Peasant women shared in the farm work with their husbands. All peasants, whether free or serf, owed the lord certain duties. These included at least a few days of labor each week and a certain portion of their grain.

**A Self-Contained World** Peasants rarely traveled more than 25 miles from their own manor. By standing in the center of a plowed field, they could see their entire world at a glance. A manor usually covered only a few square miles of land. It...
Feudalism was a political system in which nobles were granted the use of land that legally belonged to the king. In return, the nobles agreed to give their loyalty and military services to the king. Feudalism developed not only in Europe but also in countries like Japan.

**European Feudalism**

- King
- Church Official
- Knights
- Peasants

**Japanese Feudalism**

- Emperor
- Daimyo
- Samurai
- Peasants
- Artisans
- Merchants

* SOURCES: A Distant Mirror by Barbara Tuchman; Encyclopaedia Britannica

**FEUDAL FACTS AND FIGURES**

- In the 14th century, before the bubonic plague struck, the population of France was probably between 10 and 21 million people.
- In feudal times, the building of a cathedral took between 50 to 150 years.
- In feudal times, dukedoms were large estates ruled by a duke. In 1216, the Duke of Anjou had 34 knights, the Duke of Brittany had 36 knights, and the Count of Flanders had 47 knights.
- In the 14th century, the nobility in France made up about 1 percent of the population.
- The word feudalism comes from the Latin word feudum, meaning fief.
- The Japanese word daimyo comes from the words dai, meaning “large,” and myo (shorten from myoden), meaning “name-land” or “private land.”

**RESEARCH LINKS** For more on feudalism, go to classzone.com

**INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY**
typically consisted of the lord’s manor house, a church, and workshops. Generally, 15 to 30 families lived in the village on a manor. Fields, pastures, and woodlands surrounded the village. Sometimes a stream wound through the manor. Streams and ponds provided fish, which served as an important source of food. The mill for grinding the grain was often located on the stream.

The manor was largely a self-sufficient community. The serfs and peasants raised or produced nearly everything that they and their lord needed for daily life—crops, milk and cheese, fuel, cloth, leather goods, and lumber. The only outside purchases were salt, iron, and a few unusual objects such as millstones. These were huge stones used to grind flour. Crops grown on the manor usually included grains, such as wheat, rye, barley, and oats, and vegetables, such as peas, beans, onions, and beets.

The Harshness of Manor Life For the privilege of living on the lord’s land, peasants paid a high price. They paid a tax on all grain ground in the lord’s mill. Any attempt to avoid taxes by baking bread elsewhere was treated as a crime. Peasants also paid a tax on marriage. Weddings could take place only with the lord’s
consent. After all these payments to the lord, peasant families owed the village priest a **tithe**, or church tax. A tithe represented one-tenth of their income.

Serfs lived in crowded cottages, close to their neighbors. The cottages had only one or two rooms. If there were two rooms, the main room was used for cooking, eating, and household activities. The second was the family bedroom. Peasants warmed their dirt-floor houses by bringing pigs inside. At night, the family huddled on a pile of straw that often crawled with insects. Peasants’ simple diet consisted mainly of vegetables, coarse brown bread, grain, cheese, and soup.

*Piers Plowman*, written by William Langland in 1362, reveals the hard life of English peasants:

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What by spinning they save, they spend it in house-hire,  
Both in milk and in meal to make a mess of porridge,  
To cheer up their children who chafe for their food,  
And they themselves suffer surely much hunger  
And woe in the winter, with waking at nights  
And rising to rock an oft restless cradle.
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WILLIAM LANGLAND, *Piers Plowman*

For most serfs, both men and women, life was work and more work. Their days revolved around raising crops and livestock and taking care of home and family. As soon as children were old enough, they were put to work in the fields or in the home. Many children did not survive to adulthood. Illness and malnutrition were constant afflictions for medieval peasants. Average life expectancy was about 35 years. And during that short lifetime, most peasants never traveled more than 25 miles from their homes.

Yet, despite the hardships they endured, serfs accepted their lot in life as part of the Church’s teachings. They, like most Christians during medieval times, believed that God determined a person’s place in society.