Lesson 2

MAIN IDEAS

1. **Economics** The manor system provided an economic structure in Europe during the Middle Ages.

2. **Culture** During the Middle Ages, knights were highly valued for their military skills.

3. **Culture** During the Middle Ages, towns gradually reappeared and thrived.

TAKING NOTES

**Reading Skill:** Comparing and Contrasting
Comparing and contrasting means finding similarities and differences between two or more things. Use a chart like the one below to highlight the differences between life on a manor and life in a town.

![Diagram of Middle Ages with branches labeled Manor Life and Town Life]

1. __________
2. __________

Skillbuilder Handbook, page R4

CALIFORNIA STANDARDS

7.6.1 Study the geography of Europe and the Eurasian land mass, including their location, topography, waterways, vegetation, and climate and their relationship to ways of life in Medieval Europe.

7.6.3 Understand the development of feudalism, its role in the medieval European economy, the way in which it was influenced by physical geography (the role of the manor and the growth of towns), and how feudal relationships provided the foundation of political order.

CST 3 Students use a variety of maps and documents to identify physical and cultural features of neighborhoods, cities, states, and countries and to explain the historical migration of people, expansion and disintegration of empires, and the growth of economic systems.
Daily Life in Medieval Europe

Build on What You Know  During the Middle Ages, feudalism formed the basis of European society. But what was it like to live in the feudal system? In this lesson, you will read about how the main classes of feudal society lived.

The Manor System

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  What role did the manor system play in the economic structure of Europe during the Middle Ages?

As you have read, warfare and political disorder characterized much of Europe during the Middle Ages. In the absence of strong central governments, Europe became little more than a series of kingdoms and lands held by high-ranking nobles. In such a setting, there was little trade or commercial interaction. Instead, the lands held by the nobles became the center of most economic activity.

The Role of the Manor  The main part of a noble's land was called a manor. The center of a manor was the house where the lord and his family lived. Often the manor house was a fortified building or castle. Surrounding the manor house was the lord’s estate. Much of the estate consisted of farmland.

Dover Castle  Dover Castle, one of the more fortified castles of the medieval period, sits along the famous Cliffs of Dover in southern England.
Manor Life and the Economy  As Lesson 1 explained, peasants called serfs lived and worked on the manor. The serfs farmed the land, which formed the economic basis of the manor system. Serfs were said to be “bound to the soil.” This meant that they were considered part of the property. They remained on the land if a new lord acquired it.

Feudalism and manor life had a powerful effect on the medieval European economy. The land on a manor supplied residents with most of the things they needed. As a result, most activity—from farming to woodworking to wine making—took place on the manor. Manors became worlds unto themselves, and few people ever left the property.

REVIEW  Why did residents of the manor rarely have to leave?

The Age of Chivalry

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  What was chivalry?

As you learned in Lesson 1, knights were often vassals, or lesser nobles, who fought on behalf of lords in return for land. During the Middle Ages, conflict often broke out between various lords. Many times, they settled a quarrel simply by attacking each other. To do their fighting, lords relied on knights, who were skilled horse riders and fighters.
Knighthood and Chivalry  Knights were not merely professional fighters. They were expected to live by a code of honor known as chivalry. They had to demonstrate a strong religious faith and a willingness to defend the Catholic Church. They were also expected to protect women and the weak. In addition, knights were supposed to fight against injustice and show courage in every battle they fought. The battles that knights and other warriors fought ranged from bloody open field skirmishes to grueling attacks on castles.

To capture a castle, lords and knights used weapons such as battering rams and catapults. Often an attacking force put a castle under siege. During a siege, an army tries to prevent food or supplies from entering a castle. Its goal was to slowly starve the people inside and force them to surrender.

REVIEW How was a knight expected to act under the honor code of chivalry?

The Growth of Towns

ESSENTIAL QUESTION  What was town life like during the Middle Ages?

Around A.D. 1000, town life began to return to Europe. This was due in large part to the fact that a number of lords became increasingly powerful. They brought peace and stability to numerous regions. As a result, people felt more safe and secure. Merchants began to travel more freely and trade their goods. Wherever merchants settled, builders and other tradespeople gathered around them.

Town Life  Most medieval towns were dirty, cramped, and busy places. In the center of town were the market square and a cathedral. The streets were narrow, filthy, and usually not paved. After a rain, streets turned to mud that was often knee-deep. Most of the houses were made out of wood and easily caught fire. As a result, entire towns often burned down. In France, between 1200 and 1225, the city of Rouen burned down six times!
The Guilds  In towns, people with the same occupation formed groups called guilds. Many guilds were formed by tradespeople, such as goldsmiths, bakers, weavers, and dyers. Guilds made rules that controlled the quantity and quality of production. The guilds watched out for their members and worked to make sure everyone found employment.

The formation of the guilds was one of the many unique aspects of life in Medieval Europe. However, a feudal society developed thousands of miles away in Japan that showed both similarities and differences to the way of life in Europe.

**REVIEW** What led to the growth of towns in Medieval Europe?

**Lesson Summary**
- The manor system shaped the economy in feudal Europe.
- During an age marked by warfare and fighting, knights became a highly valued group in society.
- As warfare declined and trade increased, town life reappeared during the Middle Ages.

**Why It Matters Now . . .**
Today people who share an occupation often form groups known as unions. Unions help their members gain better wages and working conditions.

2 Terms & Names
1. Explain the importance of manor knight chivalry guild

Using Your Notes
Comparing and Contrasting Use your completed chart to answer the following question:
2. What was the main economic activity in each setting? (7.6.3)

Main Ideas
3. How were serfs an important part of the manor system? (7.6.3)
4. Why were knights highly valued in medieval society? (HI 2)
5. Why did tradespeople form guilds? (7.6.3)

Critical Thinking
6. Identifying Issues and Problems  Do you think the lack of long-distance trade hurt society during the early Middle Ages? Explain. (7.6.3)

7. Drawing Conclusions from Sources What were the benefits and drawbacks of town life in Medieval Europe? (HI 1)

Activity
Making a Map  Using the map on page 287 as a reference, draw the major mountain ranges and rivers of Europe on the world map you have created. (7.6.1)