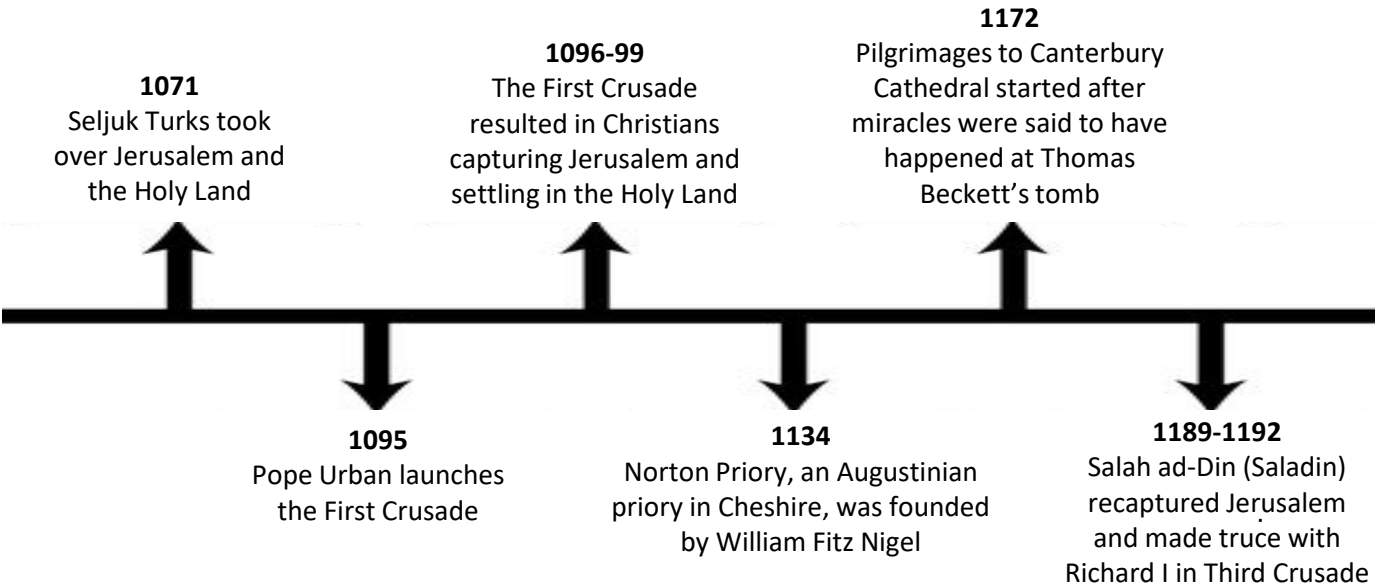


Knowledge Organiser: How important was religion to people in the Middle Ages?

Topic Summary:

Religious beliefs were central to peoples’ lives in the Middle Ages. Almost everyone believed in God and attended church. The Church’s teaching about heaven, hell and purgatory influenced how people lived their lives. Religious leaders and institutions held great power in this period. Strong Christian and Muslim beliefs led to people fighting in the Crusades both in the Holy Land and Europe.

Key Dates:



Key People:

	Parish Priest A man specially trained to perform religious duties in their Parish. They played an important role in Medieval society and peoples’ lives.
	Joan of Leeds A young woman forced by her parents into being a nun who faked her own death in order to escape her life as a nun.
	St Hilda of Whitby The founder and first abbess of the monastery at Whitby. Kings and Princes asked for her advice because of her wisdom and diplomacy.
	Pope Urban II He was Head of the Catholic church from 1088-1099. He ordered the First Crusade of Christians to go and fight the Seljuk Turks in the Holy Land.
	Salah ad-Din Known by the Crusaders as ‘Saladin’. He was leader of the Muslims and recaptured Jerusalem in 1187.

Vocabulary:

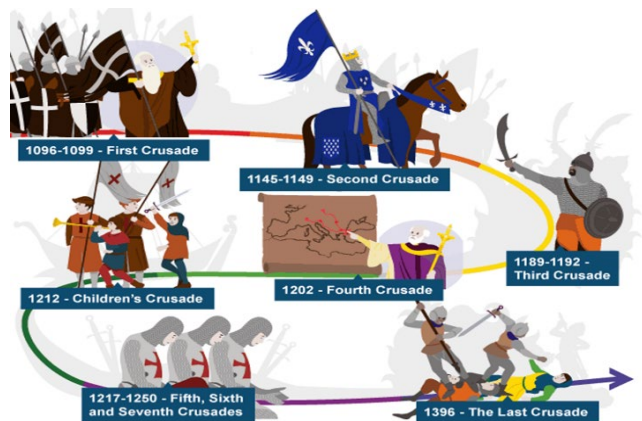
Church		A Christian organization with its own clergy, buildings, and distinctive beliefs
Heaven		The home of God, the angels and the spirits of people without sin after death.
Pope		The Head of the Catholic Church in Rome
Holy Day		A Christian festival celebrating the life of Jesus, the disciples, or Saints
Hell		The realm of evil and suffering where the wicked are punished after death
Holy Land		Land considered sacred by Christians, Jews, and Muslims in Palestine, including Jerusalem
Purgatory		Catholics believe in a place in between heaven and hell where sins are paid for
Pilgrimage		A journey taken for religious reasons
Monastery		The home of monks living in seclusion under religions vows
Crusade		A Holy War to capture and retain the Holy Land for Christianity

Core Knowledge:

Lesson 1: Why were Christian beliefs in the Middle Ages so important?	- Christians believed that there was one God and that Jesus was the son of God. - They believed that you would go to Heaven or Hell after death and that you would work off your sins in Purgatory. - They believed where you ended up depended on how you lived your life and if you followed the teachings of the Church. - The Catholic Church was therefore very powerful as it influenced every aspect of peoples' lives. The Church was a very powerful institution with a strict hierarchy. - Every village had a church and a priest. Everyone had to go to church every Sunday. Churches were very big, wealthy and awe inspiring! - It was also a major landowner and was very rich as it received taxes (a tithe). - The Church was a major provider of jobs and careers such as priests, monks and nuns.
Lesson 2: How important were parish priests in peoples' lives?	- Parish priests were men specially trained to perform religious duties. - Every village/town had a priest who taught them about God and led church services, including weddings, baptisms and funerals. - They also often had great influence over administration, education and medicine as they were literate. - He was often an advisor and local leader. During confession, the priest would listen while parishioners told him of the sinful things they had done. He would pray for them as an intermediary with God and could forgive their sins.
Lesson 3: Why were monasteries so important in medieval England?	- Monasteries were religious houses where monks lived under religious vows. Nuns lived in nunneries (convents). Monks and Nuns chose to devote their lives to God as they wanted to get to heaven, they wanted to lead peaceful, safe lives and they wanted an education. - Monks and nuns made promises of poverty, chastity and obedience. - Monasteries owned massive amounts of land and wealth and provided jobs for many. There were nearly 900 religious houses in England. - Monasteries played an important role in medieval life. They provided healthcare for the sick and elderly in infirmaries (hospitals). They had guesthouses for travellers and gave charity (alms) to the poor. - Monasteries were also important centres of learning that had large libraries and provided education for local children. - Many people went on pilgrimage, a religious journey, to monasteries in order to gain favour with God or prayed for monks to pray for their souls.
Lesson 4: How important was the Church to Medieval Women?	- The Church offered women the opportunity to retain their independence and allowed them to have positions of importance. An example is Hilda of Whitby who was a very influential Abbess. - It offered an education in theology, literature, music and the arts that was not possible for many ordinary women. - Becoming a nun or abbess was an alternative to the constraints of marriage and the dangers of childbirth. Religious women also had the opportunity to do the work of God in the community. Some did not want this though, such as Joan of Leeds.

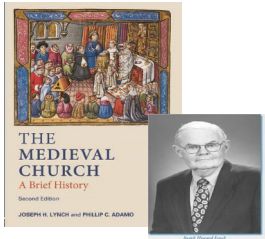
Need to be FREE OF SIN:

- Pray to saints and Virgin Mary
- Pilgrimage
- Confess sins to a priest
- Indulgences (pay the church money for forgiveness)
- Buy a relic
- Good works of mercy
- Prayer
- Read the bible



Lesson 5: Why were religious festivals and pilgrimages so important to people in the medieval period?	- Churches in medieval England had lots of celebrations that were very important in people's lives. There was at least one festival every month of the year with Easter being the highlight of year. Holy Days were taken as holidays where people did not have to work. These often included feasts, singing, dancing and playing games. - It was considered a Christians duty at some part in their life to go on a pilgrimage, a religious journey. Popular English routes included Walsingham and Canterbury. Foreign routes included Clermont in France, Compostela in Spain, Rome in Italy and Jerusalem in the Holy Land. - Pilgrims went in the belief that their prayers at the Holy Shrines would be answered, that it would help get them out of purgatory, and that drinking Holy Water from wells would cure them of illness. Ultimately, they believed it would help them get to Heaven.
Lesson 6: Why did people go on Crusade?	Jerusalem and the Holy Land were important for Christians, Jews and Muslims. - In 1095 Pope Urban II called all Christian to go on Crusade to fight the Seljuk Turks and take over Jerusalem and the Holy Land. - Thousands of people decided to go on Crusade as the Church promised that all those who took up the cross and went on crusade would go to heaven. They also had other motives such as the opportunity to gain wealth, power and to escape their lives in England. - This led to a total of eight crusades across the medieval period, including a Children's Crusade in 1212. The Christians captured Jerusalem in the First Crusade but then Salah ad-Din recaptured it in 1187 in the Third Crusade. None of the subsequent Crusades repeated the success of the First Crusade and they failed to recapture Jerusalem.
Lesson 7: What were the impact of the Crusades?	- The Crusades had social, political, economic, religious and military impacts. - Crusaders learned from fighting Muslims such as new methods of warfare including archery and trebuchets. They also copied Muslim castle design. Crusaders also learned from living peacefully and talking to the Muslims. They brought back many new products, such as lemons, apricots, spices, cotton and silk. They also learnt to communicate using carrier pigeons! They learned how to use Arabic numbers and brought back knowledge of the Ancient Greeks, medicine and disease. They also used Muslim ideas about technology and travel. - Negatively, the Crusades turned Christians and Muslims into long standing rivals and enemies. Positively, it transformed the Holy Land and benefited Europe economically and culturally.
Enquiry Outcome: How do I complete the enquiry outcome well?	- You will need to design a storyboard for a <i>BBC Horrible Histories</i> series which describes, illustrates and explains four reasons why religion was important to people in the Middle Ages. - You will need a conclusion on how important religion was to people overall and whether it had a positive or negative impact.

What do historians say?

	<i>The Medieval Church: A Brief History</i>, Joseph H. Lynch Lynch argues that “the Church was involved in every aspect of life in Medieval Europe. It attempted to control the lives and behaviour of medieval people, for example, through Christian belief, crusades and festivals. It was simply the dominant force in Medieval Europe.”“
	<i>“The Middle Ages” and “Going Medieval”, Eleanor Janega</i> Janega has a book and Podcast documentary on life in the Middle Ages. She explores the lives of those who made up the single largest unifying organization in medieval Europe: the Roman Catholic Church.

How can I find out more?

BBC Bitesize



History Hit: Going Medieval



