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**We are going to consider the time between 1096 and 1291, which spans about 200 years. Stop now and think about that period of time. Has Christopher Columbus sailed yet? How long has it been since the fall of Rome? Is most of Europe Christian yet, or is it still peopled by the Celts and pagans? Has the bubonic plague struck Europe yet? What's happening, by your best guess, in the American continents at this time? Is it the time of Robin Hood or Boyz in the Hood? Don't move on until you know where you're standing.**

**The year 1096 in medieval Europe was neither the gentlest nor the most intellectual. That's not to say that people were stupid, but they certainly were very naive. They believed the priests of the Roman Catholic Church who told them they were sinners**

**and that life was tough and was meant to be - that they were paying for Adam and Eve's disobedience a long time ago. They believed that the misery of this life would be erased in the second life everlasting after they had died. They didn't have**

**much food; they didn't have much schooling; they certainly didn't have much in the way of breaks in life. They did have the church, and the church ruled their lives and gave them hope.**

**Making the church angry, then, was serious business. The church gave (and sometimes sold) the forgiveness that medieval people needed to get into heaven. A torturous and evil hell was a very real thing to these people. They were already living it; they certainly didn't need more of it after death. So the people listened to the church and its holy fathers and tried to do as they were told.**

**Also during these 200 years, people followed the principle of primogeniture. This meant that the oldest son inherited all the land and riches. Standing around in their armor, doing not much else but grumbling, were a bunch of nobles' second, third and fourth sons. They couldn't even go about causing problems by using their superior advantage to spread misery because the church had made rules about when and where they could fight. A bunch of strong boys with sharp toys looking for a place to rumble: sounds like trouble!**

**The leaders of the church didn't like all these unemployed knights getting into trouble. They also didn't like the idea that the church and Christendom (the geographic areas that followed Christianity) were basically split into two parts. Years ago, the eastern part of the Roman Empire divided off and returned**

**to following Greek ways of life. This division was called the Byzantine Empire and its capital was Constantinople. The Byzantine Empire had slightly different rules and very different lifestyles from the Roman Empire, even though both empires' people were Christian. The Byzantines were much more civilized than the barbarian-influenced western area. Rome's pope and the church leaders of the western region wanted to bring both sides together under the leadership of the pope, but there was no easy way to do that.**

**Introduction to the Crusades**

**Bingo! The Turks were threatening Alexis Comena, who was the emperor of the Byzantine Empire. The Turks had pushed their way across and through several civilizations, had overrun Jerusalem and were now knocking on the door of Comena's empire. Comena wrote to Pope Urban II, leader of the western church, and asked for help. The pope took all these bored, misbehaving knights and promised them heavenly forgiveness and lands (except for the eastern half of Christendom) if they would reunite Europe and the church under the western pope's influence. He was a man with a plan; however, the best laid plans often go astray.**

**As you learn about the Crusades (the word means "war of the cross"), you'll see that this period is the beginning of a long and hard conflict between Muslim and Christian people. The Crusades led to quiet and almost unnoticed changes in the Christian world. However, those changes turned out to be very important in changing the medieval world into the Renaissance world.**

**The people who came back from the Crusades adopted new fashions, manners, foods, spices, cultural outlooks, learning and weapons. But the people who waited behind changed as well. They became less trusting of the church and its motives and people. They began to question. They also were given their first opportunity and permission to ignore the desires of their lords and masters. The world was changing; it just didn't know it yet.**

**Timeline of the Crusades**

**The People's Crusade: 1096 (April to October)
 *To conquer the Holy Land***

**The First Crusade: 1096 to 1099
*To conquer the Holy Land***

**The Years after the First Crusade: 1099 to 1144
*Knights Templar and Hospitallers created***

**The Second Crusade: 1145 to 1149
*To recapture the Holy Land***

**The Third Crusade: 1189 to 1192
*To recapture the Holy Land***

**The Fourth Crusade: 1202 to 1204
*To capture Constantinople***

**The Children's Crusade: 1212
*To bring goodness and innocence* to *quest***

**The Fifth Crusade: 1217 to 1221
*To establish secure base in Egypt***

**The Sixth Crusade: 1228
*To recapture the Holy Land***

**The Seventh Crusade: 1248 to 1254
*To capture a base in Egypt and regain the Holy Land***

**The Eighth Crusade: 1270-1291
To convert Bay of *Tunis* to Christianity *and* recapture holy places *in the* Holy *Land***



**As the pope was getting knights, warriors, supplies and plans collected, the story of a great crusade spread through the countryside. Common people wanted to join up and they eventually chose as their leader a man known in history as "little Peter.” In 1096, Peter led a band of uneducated and unprepared people in what is now known as the People's Crusade. In order to make the journey, though, the crusaders needed money. The common people preparing to leave with little Peter for the Holy Land found the money in the only place they could justify. Throughout Europe, 10,000 Jews were stabbed, dismembered and killed for their gold by the Christian crusaders. When this particular holocaust was finished, the People's Crusade had plenty of money and over 100,000 followers.**

**Little Peter's army was rich but not well-led or well-trained. The army trashed and pillaged Christian towns as it traveled. When it finally did arrive in Byzantine and met with Emperor Comena, it was a terrifying band of wild people. Comena helped little Peter's army get through his country and on toward the Turks, who promptly slaughtered the soldiers. The better-looking people were sold into slavery, but most died. The year was 1096.**

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The People’s Crusade

**The First Crusade**

**Bishop Adhemar led the first official crusade in 1096. He was in charge of five different armies, each led by its own noble. In battle, the former barbarian soldiers now were Christian crusaders who were disciplined and steady. They managed to win against incredible odds. At one point, 30,000 crusaders, led by a warrior named Bohemond, held off 360,000 Turks. Some say that had to do with**

**the fact that the Turkish kingdom and armies were in a state of upheaval as they fought among themselves. The Turks were never very cohesive; many rivalries existed. At a particularly low point of battle, the Christian crusaders found what they believed to be**

**the holy lance, the lance that pierced the side of Jesus when he was crucified. This miracle renewed their spirit and they continued their conquests.**

**Before the crusaders could reach the walls of Jerusalem, the Turks who had overrun it were expelled by another group called the Fatimid Muslims. The Fatimid Muslims had been friendly and accepting of Christian people, but the crusaders had come too far to be calmed. Even though the Fatimid Muslim people offered to share the city that is holy to both religions and give Christians easy access to Jerusalem and Mount Zion, the crusaders decided to change the holy war against the Muslim Turks into a holy war against all Muslims and the entire Islam religion.**

**The Christian crusaders broke through the walls of Jerusalem using battering rams and siege towers. Once inside, they killed and disgraced the dead bodies of 70,000 Muslims and Jews who were living there. Jerusalem was officially a Christian city. The year was 1099.**



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**The Knights of Saint John were better known as the Hospitallers because they originally worked in a hospital and cared for travelers. They, like the Knights Templar before them, turned to violence and war to further the interests of Christians in the Holy Land. They also became very wealthy. They wore black robes over their armor and had white crosses sewn to their sleeves.**

**A Muslim leader named Zengi managed to overtake a large Christian city called Edessa. He killed all the invading western Christians, but spared the eastern, or Byzantine, Christians. Still, his act scared the western church. Pope Eugenius III announced that a new army must be raised. The year was 1144.**

**Christians were in control of the Holy Land, but as the years passed, they became spoiled and lazy. When they did go back to central Europe, they brought with them riches, fine *spices,* exotic jewelry, beautiful women, wonderful fabrics and tales of adventure and land to be taken. On top of that, the newly seated pope, Paschal II, was preaching that more armies must go to reinforce the conquests earned by the First Crusade. According to Paschal, the fight against the Muslim people was not over, so many groups formed to continue and support the battle. Two of those were monks called the Knights Templar and the Knights of Saint John.**

**The Knights Templar were formidable and holy killers who vowed to protect all crusading travelers. They answered only to the pope and had very strict rules for themselves. Still, they managed to become very rich because nobles and common people who couldn't crusade but wanted the church's blessings gave them money. The Knights Templar wore long, white robes with red crosses over their armor.**

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|  | **The Years After the First Crusade** |  |

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**Second Crusade**

**The Second Crusade was only talk and tales until a very persuasive speaker named Bernard of Clairvaux started selling the idea. He spoke of the "horrors” of the Holy Land falling into unbelievers' hands and promised that God would reward the souls of those who fought for him. Bernard's power of persuasion was amazing. People listened and vowed to follow.**

**In 1145, two kings, Louis VII and the Holy Roman Emperor Conrad II, amassed their armies and headed for Jerusalem. Almost 1 million people were involved in the Second Crusade. The crusaders changed direction for an unknown reason, and instead of attacking**

**the Muslims who overthrew Edessa, they attacked the only Muslim friends the Christians had, who lived in the city of Damascus. This strategy only helped to unite all the Muslim nations together against the Christians.**

**Once the crusaders were outside the walls of Damascus and the city's Muslim people sent notice of surrender to them, the victorious crusaders milled about a bit and then left. They never even entered the city and to this day no one knows why. They packed up and went home. The only thing they accomplished was to make the Muslim nations more solidified.**

**Years later, a Sunni Muslim of Kurdish descent built his own army. Historically, he is known as Saladin. His hope was to further the unintended result of the Second Crusade by joining all Muslim forces together under one leader. He conquered all of Egypt and then officially took back Jerusalem from the Christians knights who conquered it. To make his point, he didn't harm the common Christians but he allowed the captured Christian knights to be beheaded by people unskilled in the art. It took a great many chops and swings, and the unfortunate people bled to death before the heads were finally removed. Jerusalem was once again a Muslim city. The year was 1149.**

**The Third Crusade**

**Pope Gregory VII said sinful people were the reason Jerusalem had fallen into Muslim hands again. He taxed the common people to build up enough money to send out a third crusading army. These crusades must have been quite a headache for the poor commoners. As all this was happening, King Richard ruled England, but he didn't care much about his country. He used his title to raid the churches and countryside and then in 1189 left on the Third Crusade. King Phillip of France and his armies joined him along the way. They decided to go by ship rather than by land as the ones before them had gone. Along the way, King Richard conquered Sicily and Cyprus with brutal ease. This built up his reputation and earned him the name Richard the Lionheart.**

**Eventually the French armies under King Phillip returned home and Richard went on by himself. He conquered the city of Acre,**

**Sending word that he wanted to meet with Saladin. Saladin didn't respond quickly enough, so Richard took 3,000 captured Muslim men, women and children to a hillside within view of Saladin and had the innocent people slaughtered to show the Muslim warrior and king the power of a Christian warrior and king.**

**The two great leaders fought on against each other in many different cities and became respectful enemies. It is said that Richard could ride in front of the army of Saladin unarmed and not be attacked because those warriors had too much respect for his abilities. Eventually Richard the Lionheart and Saladin drew up a truce. Some of the Holy Land went to the Christians and some to the Muslims. Saladin still held Jerusalem, but he allowed Christians to make pilgrimages freely. The agreement was only for three years only because Richard believed he could return and retake Jerusalem. He never did. The year was 1192.**





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The Fourth Crusade was launched in 1202 at the command of Pope Innocent III. He couldn't get anyone to listen to him until he threatened to excommunicate anyone who didn't agree. A tax was imposed on all Christendom, and French and Venetian armies gathered their forces.

The Venetians were having a hard time getting enough money or supplies, however, so they convinced the French army to join them in the destruction of a Christian seaport called Zara. They earned the money they needed, but they also earned a sentence of excommunication by the pope.

Remember, Byzantine was the eastern half of Christendom and the pope would have very much liked to have had it under his control. Word was sent from Byzantine and its capital of Constantinople that the emperor there had been deposed and blinded by his brother. The pope declared that if the crusaders would get involved in that battle and return the throne to the correct brother, all would be forgiven. So the Venetian and French Christian crusaders forgot about the Muslim people and went to attack the Christian capital of Constantinople instead.

Eventually, the combined forces conquered Constantinople with the use of special bridges. The bridges attached to the masts of ships and then to the city walls. Crusading soldiers were able to invade the watchtowers simultaneously and quickly overran the entire city. The crusading army did a bit more than chase the bad brother off one of the city walls to his death. They also murdered and raped the Christian people of Constantinople including the nuns; burned down libraries containing the only copies of ancient Greek texts;

removed all the gold, jewels and holy relics from churches; and melted down ancient Greek statues for their metal. Needless to say, the people of that area weren't too interested in merging their form of eastern Christianity with the western kind they saw in the crusaders. Byzantine was no longer. (The eastern Roman Empire declined, but it held out until 1453.) It was renamed Romania, and the eastern and western church factions never were united. The crusaders never did get near Jerusalem. The year was 1204.



The Fourth Crusade

r„. **The Children's Crusade**

83

**The Crusades until now haven't been very successful or what we would call very Christian. It is important to remember that in that time, there were sincere attempts at reforming the world in the name of God. Most of the crusaders then believed in the right and goodness of what they were doing. Some, however, saw the Crusades as a get-rich scheme. When independent pride and greed got in the way, things went sour. Eventually, someone came up with the idea that simple goodness and innocence were necessary for this crusade idea to work. That person was a German youth named Nicholas.**

**In 1212, 30,000 children looking for adventure, truly believing and just wanting to escape home followed Nicholas across the Alps and toward the sea, where they hoped to be able to sail to the Holy Land. Instead, those who survived the trip were gathered by a Norwegian man, who sold them into slavery and prostitution.**

**A similar group of 20,000 French children followed a boy named Stephen. When they reached the sea, they were permitted to board seven ships. Two of those ships sank and the children drowned. The other five docked in Africa, where the children were immediately sold into slavery.**

**This hopeless and sad tale didn't kill off the crusader fever. The pope announced that anyone could join a crusade without permission. Peasants didn't need to ask the permission of their lords; they could just go. And despite what happened to the children, many did long to make the journey. The year was 1212.**

**The Fifth Crusade**

**In 1215, the church divided up Europe into taxation sections and imposed new taxes to support the crusades. Each person was responsible for paying a penny a week — a huge sum at that time. In 1217, the Fifth Crusade was outfitted and ready to leave. The army planned to enter Jerusalem by way of the sea and then across the Nile River.**

**At this time, the Muslim world was ruled by Saladin's nephew, al-Kamul. He offered the crusaders an unbelievable deal — they could simply have the Holy Land, no questions asked. The pope, however, wanted them to hold out for all of Egypt, too. He knew that Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II was headed in that direction with an army.**

**Frederick never showed up, though. The crusaders were led into Egypt by a Roman Cardinal named Pelagius. They camped on a flat area between two threads of the Nile River, which they were unaware was a flood plain. The Muslims knew. They opened the barriers, and the Fifth Crusade washed away in the night. The year was 1221.**

**The Sixth Crusade**

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**Jerusalem was once again open to Christians and Muslims both, but the pope was still so angry at Frederick, he excommunicated him and the whole city of Jerusalem. The city was open, but now no Christian could travel there and still be considered a Christian. The year was 1228.**

**Al-Kamul was having a bit of trouble. His own brother was trying to take his power. Al-Kamul told Frederick about it and finally, in 1228, Frederick decided to go fight. But he was going to fight for the Muslims and al-Kamul. He was supposed to be fighting against them.**

**Remember the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II from the previous crusade? He was the one who never showed up. It turns out that he had gotten far enough east to adopt some of the eastern and Arab habits. He read the Koran; he studied Islam; he smoked hashish; he even kept a harem. Despite the warnings and anger of the pope, Frederick never really got all bothered about fighting for Jerusalem. It seems not too much at all bothered him. He even made friends with the leader of the Arab/Muslim world, al-Kamul.**

**By the time Frederick arrived with his army, the brother issue had been handled. The two leaders sat down and talked. They decided the Christians could have everything they wanted regarding Jerusalem, as long as Muslims were still allowed to worship there. In**

**return, the Christians would promise to help the Muslims if they needed it in fighting the advancing horde of Mongols who were coming from the east.**

**The Seventh Crusade**

**The pope, who still was furious with Frederick, announced a new crusade in 1248. The twist was that this time it was against Frederick himself, the guy who made it possible (and impossible) for Christians to go to Jerusalem. Christians were once again taxed to pay for a march to Jerusalem. They were getting a bit tired of it all, to say the least.**

**The new and Seventh Crusade was led by Louis IX of France. He was a good and Christian man who decided to attack when he heard that Turkish Muslims had overrun Jerusalem and slaughtered countless innocents. Even the Knights Templar and the Hospitallers couldn't fight against these wild men. The Holy Land was completely Muslim now and no Christian was safe there.**

**Despite King Louis' good character and plans, his armies were no match for the Muslim armies. It didn't help that much of Louis' army was dying of dysentery. Some historians say it was so bad that men simply cut holes in the back of their britches. That had to make "turning tail" and running a bit awkward, but King Louis was forced to retreat and regroup. The Seventh Crusade was over. The year was 1254.**

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**King Louis of France wasn't ready to give up. In 270, he negotiated with those scary hordes, the Mongols, mentioned in the Sixth Crusade. He figured Christians and the Mongols could combine forces and finally drive the Muslim people out of the Holy Land. He knew that in them he had a great weapon.**

**But the Muslims had a great weapon, too. There was a practice at the time of abducting young Russian slaves, forcing them to convert**

**to Islam, bringing them into the Muslim world and training them to become extremely cruel warriors who would protect the most important leaders. These slave children were raised without any mercy, so they knew none. They were called Mamelukes and they were some of the meanest people in all of history. At one point, an Arab Muslim leader had tried to get rid of his protective Mameluke warriors and they got rid of him instead. That's how Qutuz, the Mameluke Muslim, came to power. Qutuz and his army easily decimated the feared Mongols. Now that's just scary.**

**King Louis was on his own now. His Mongol surprise wasn't going to work. On top of that, he found only 10,000 people willing to march in the Eighth Crusade. When the crusaders' ships landed in Africa, King Louis died of a stomach problem and the final crusade collapsed. He was later canonized as Saint Louis. In the meantime, the Mamelukes killed off all Christian knights and people anywhere in the Holy Land. It was over. The Arab nations ruled the land that had been fought over for so long. The year was 1291.**

**The Eighth Crusade**





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