

Beautiful Feet Books presents:

MEDIEVAL HISTORY THROUGH LITERATURE

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A Literature Approach for High School

“History is
philosophy by
example and also by
warning.”
—Lord Bolingbroke

“Take up and
read, take up
and read.”

—St. Augustine
Confessions

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INTRODUCTION



The Middle Ages. The term probably conjures up images of brave knights and fair ladies, feasts and tournaments, castles and cathedrals. These are the elements of this time period that capture our imagination and may possibly be the reason you want to study the Middle Ages in the first place. And we will learn about some pretty brave knights—King Richard, Beowulf, Saladin and others, as well as some very fair ladies, among them, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Joan of Arc, and Shahrazad. We will also learn about the Tartars who conquered China. We will learn about what life was like for the common people, who were called serfs, and lived under a brutal system called feudalism until they decided they had had enough and rebelled. That was called the Peasant’s Revolt and it was the first time, in a long time, that people demanded change. But change came in many ways and one of those ways was how people communicated with God. We will learn about Martin Luther who revealed a new way to approach God that did not involve paying a priest to pray for you. There was also a new way to read the Bible and we have John Wycliffe to thank for that. We will learn about the man who made it possible for people to own a Bible. His name was Johann Gutenberg and he invented the printing press.

But even before he had invented the printing press, the Chinese were printing paper money—the first to ever do so, and we will learn about that as well. In the midst of all these advancements, people still liked to have fun, none more than a man named Chaucer. Chaucer found people to be very funny, and he wrote down the stories of these people for his own amusement. As you can tell, the Middle Ages was a very busy time full of change. Brilliant minds lived between 400 AD and 1522 AD, the years that will be covered in this study. For a long time, this period of history was referred to as the Dark Ages because people thought very little had been accomplished during this time. They had come to believe that it was a time of fighting, famine, and feudalism and those things were very common, but we now know that much more took place. Documents were printed, like the Magna Carta that helped shape future democracies, including our own. The Bible was printed on presses in many languages, including English and German, not just Latin as it had been in the past. People were traveling further and further distances and bringing to Europe exotic spices and fabric. Scientists were studying the heavens and alchemists were trying to make gold. Toward the end of the Middle Ages, explorers were sailing ships to the far corners of the globe, even to our continent! So as you can probably tell, it was not the Dark Ages at all, but an exciting time to be alive.

NOTES ON HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS STUDY BY FOLLOWING THESE POINTERS AND TIPS

Welcome to the exciting world of Medieval History! This curriculum will serve to guide you through some of the best literature available on this fascinating time period. We will cover over 1100 years of history, the period from 400–1530. As this is a lot of history to cover in one school year, it is important to understand how this guide works. Please read the following thoroughly as it will make your study easier and more enjoyable.

First, this study guide is a one year study geared for high school. The literature included in this guide has been chosen for both its historical and literary significance. As this is a historical and literary survey course, only portions of some of the works will be read. This is to allow more literature to be included in the course of the year. Secondly, this is a study guide and is meant to be just that, a guide. Do not feel unduly bound to complete each step. Everything in this guide is meant to be a help to you the teacher, not a burden. The guide is laid out in weekly lessons to allow you flexibility within that structure. Each lesson has reading assignments, activity suggestions, websites for further research—which are provided to help you choose the best materials to dig a little deeper if a topic is particularly interesting to you and your students. There are writing assignments, discussion questions, hands-on craft projects—use these at your discretion. If you want to use this as a language arts course, there are many suggestions for essays, reports, and further written work. These can be used to teach principles of writing and grammar, but you will need a language arts and grammar resource.

You will come across some or all of the following terms in each lesson.

Topics Covered:

This is a brief listing of the main topics covered in each lesson and is simply provided to allow the teacher and student an introduction into what will be covered in the coming week.

The Portfolio:

Throughout the study, there are assignments designed to help the student create a portfolio of their best work. These are usually reports and should reflect the best efforts of the student. These will be collected into a portfolio that can be shown to friends and family. The portfolio can be a dedicated notebook, a website or blog—whatever medium the student feels most comfortable using. This is not a place to put vocabulary lists or answers to the comprehension questions, those can be placed in a separate notebook or binder. At the end of the year the portfolio will have reports, illustrations, poems, illuminated manuscripts and other projects the student has completed. Students should use this to showcase their creativity and hard work. Have fun working on this!

Vocabulary Lists:

A word on vocabulary—although we all have dictionaries at our fingertips (even on our smartphones!) it is very important that students expand their knowledge of the written and spoken word. Not only is a broad and varied vocabulary a tool and asset in communicating, it opens worlds that would otherwise be closed to the less verbally knowledgeable. Additionally, it is excellent preparatory work for the SAT and ACT tests. Many of the books used in this study contain arcane and old-fashioned words. In order to ensure that the student understands the material he is reading, vocabulary lists have been provided. It is strongly suggested that the student look up each word in a real (not virtual) dictionary and write out the definition. Due to the fact that some words have multiple uses, a brief definition of each vocabulary word is provided at the back of this guide. This should be used for the teacher's reference and not the students. When I was younger I spent many hours writing out vocabulary lists wondering when I would ever use words like “pulchritude”, but as an adult I am grateful to have reaped the benefits of those long hours. Not only did the exercise help with performance on standardized tests, it makes reading easier and also helps in communication when traveling. Thanks to those 5th grade vocabulary lists, I knew what was meant when I moved to the United Kingdom and was asked to bring a savory to a potluck!

Mapping and Geography:

You will notice that there are a lot of mapping assignments and it is highly suggested that each student have a large blank world map. These can easily be purchased online or at school supply stores. Those of you who live near a college or university may want to check with the bookstore on campus as large maps will often be available and reasonably priced. If you have trouble finding one, students can make their own on a large (at least 2' x 3') piece of cardstock. As this will be used throughout the course, the thicker the cardstock the better—it needs to last! These can be purchased inexpensively at your local art and craft supply stores. When completing the mapping assignments, students should use an atlas or an online mapping resource. Becoming familiar with these tools will serve the student well.

Comprehension and Discussion Questions:

As the student reads through the literature, they should work on answering the comprehension and discussion questions. Answers are provided in the answer key for the comprehension questions but it will be helpful to use the answers merely as a guide. Different perspectives provide interest and color to the study and relying too heavily on the provided answers may cause frustration. History is open to interpretation and it is important for a student to learn this fact. The discussion topics do not have answers provided as these are designed to develop the reasoning abilities of the student. The ability to converse on topics of history, religion, geopolitical and social events is a skill that students are developing at this point in their education as they formulate their own viewpoint. Encourage this growth by affirming their observations and asking probing questions. This is one of the most enjoyable aspects of studying history and it takes the subject from its dusty and dry reputation and makes it come alive. Encourage your students to think of historical characters as real people with unique beliefs and perspectives and suddenly history is no longer a collection of dates and facts but a fascinating story of the people who came before us. *For those teachers who find themselves relying heavily on the answer key, do not be afraid to throw it out! You do not want to squelch a child's learning process by relying too heavily on the prescribed answers.*

Websites:

Throughout the study you will find websites provided for further information and activities. These websites have all been viewed and deemed appropriate and accurate at the time of printing. With the ever-changing nature of the internet we cannot guarantee that they will remain so. If this happens it is often worth digging a bit deeper to see if the site has moved. Simply search for key points in the original address and more often than not, you'll find the information. Always use the internet with care and under adult supervision. Also encourage students to view the information on the internet with a critical eye! While it is a fantastic resource, the web is not always accurate and it is a great life-skill to know how to determine if information is verifiable. For the purposes of simplification, some links have been shortened.

The Medieval History Time Line:

The current Beautiful Feet Books's *Medieval History Time Line* can be used with this study. It does not match up perfectly as it focuses more on later medieval events along with the Reformation and Renaissance. Feel free to add pictures as desired.

Additional books to check out from the library:

Some lessons have suggested titles to check out from your local library. None of these titles are required and are provided in order to help you sift through the hundreds of books available on the many topics covered in this study. Feel no obligation to include any or all of the library books; you'll have plenty of information from the required reading, but if you have a voracious reader on your hands, it is my hope that the suggested titles will prove helpful.

TOPICS COVERED: EUROPE FOLLOWING THE FALL OF ROME,
THE IMPORTANCE OF STUDYING HISTORY

1. To begin our study, it is important that we set up some background information. Begin reading *The Medieval World, An Illustrated Atlas* by John M. Thompson. Read Chapter 1–400-1500: The Medieval Worldview.
2. As we begin this course, it is essential to understand why we study history. Consider the following quotes. What do these people think the purpose of history is? What is your view? Discuss this and, if desired, write an opinion piece. Add piece to your portfolio.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTORY

“[History] may be called, more generally still, the Message, verbal or written, which all Mankind delivers to everyman.”

–Thomas Carlyle

“The past is always a rebuke to the present.”

–Robert Penn Warren

“A country without a memory is a country of madmen.”

–George Santayana

“History is philosophy teaching by example and also by warning.”

–Lord Bolingbroke

“History teaches everything including the future.”

–Lamartine

“If you would understand anything, observe its beginning and its development.”

–Aristotle

“The deepest, the only theme of human history, compared to which all others are of subordinate importance, is the conflict of skepticism with faith.”

–Goethe

3. It is strongly suggested that the student use or draw a large world map throughout the course. It should be at least 2 x 3 feet and have the outlines of the seven continents. If you choose to draw the map yourself, large format art-quality paper can be purchased at art and craft stores. Throughout the course, you will be marking countries, landmarks, important rivers and charting voyages on this map. Using an atlas and the map on pages 8-9 of *The Medieval World*, mark the following:

Aquitaine	Antioch	Avignon
the Alps	Barcelona	Bologna
Calais	Canterbury	Cologne
Constantinople	Denmark	English Channel
England	France	Germany
Greece	Ireland	Italy
Jerusalem	Milan	Naples
Norway	Poland	the Pyrenees
Rome	Scotland	Seville
Spain		
Sweden		
York		

Draw the following rivers:

Danube
Rhone
Seine
Thames

You will also be marking famous trade routes and journeys of exploration. To do this you will need to set up a map key with a different colored lines used for each route or journey.



Isidore World Map, circa 1100

TOPICS COVERED: CONSTANTINE, DISINTEGRATION OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, GROWTH OF CHRISTIANITY, NICENE CREED, EDICT OF MILAN, AUGUSTINE

1. Read and discuss Chapter 2 of *The Medieval World*. Comprehension and discussion questions:
 - a. Which emperor was responsible for dividing the Roman Empire? Why did he do this?
 - b. By 303 A.D. what percentage of the Roman population had converted to Christianity?
 - c. What are the seven traditional areas of study in the Liberal Arts?
 - d. What was a *wergild*?
 - e. Define *zenophobia*.

2. As we have read, Christianity was growing rapidly during this time in history and quickly spreading throughout Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. As the faith spread there was a growing concern about beliefs that were outside of what would be accepted as orthodox. The Council of Nicea helped establish the basic and accepted tenants held by Christians. These are clearly stated in the Nicene Creed which was written and affirmed in 325 A.D. Read this statement of belief on page 1 of *Beautiful Feet Books' Anthology of Medieval Literature* (hereafter referred to as *AML*). Also read *Te Deum* on page 2. Choose either the Nicene Creed or *Te Deum* to copy in your portfolio. It may be helpful to define the following terms in advance of reading:

begotten
catholic
apostolic
remission

3. As the faith grew, a body of Christian literature began developing. This literature consisted of songs, hymns, statements of confession, biographies and other works. While many of the earliest writings were

CONSTANTINE AND THE EDICT OF MILAN

"When we, Constantine and Licinius, emperors, had an interview at Milan, and conferred together with respect to the good and security of the commonweal, it seemed to us that, amongst those things that are profitable to mankind in general, the reverence paid to the Divinity merited our first and chief attention, and that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best; so that that God, who is seated in heaven, might be benign and propitious to us, and to every one under our government."

The Emperor Constantine, who ruled from 306-337 was the first Roman Emperor to convert to Christianity at the age of 42. He ended sporadic persecution of Christians by the Roman Empire in 313 when he issued Edict of Milan. This Edict proclaimed "that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have the liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best." While it was not the first such proclamation of religious freedom, it helped legitimize Christianity in the eyes of the Roman state.

lost, many also survived and still influence the beliefs of Christians to this day. Two influential writers, known as Church Fathers, were St. Ambrose of Milan and St. Augustine of Hippo. Read St. Ambrose of Milan's *Hymn* on page 4 of AML. Ambrose was a mentor to St. Augustine, one of the most influential early Christian writers. His seminal works are *City of God*, a treatise on the role of Christians in this world and the next, and *Confessions*, the story of his conversion to Christianity. You may read excerpts from *Confessions* on pages 6-54 of AML.

4. Choose one of the following topics for further research and record your findings in a presentation:
- One of the challenges posed by the massive migrations of the 4th and 5th centuries was the clashing of differing systems of law. Can you draw any parallels to similar contemporary situations? For example, in 2010 and 2011 some of the American states presented bills to their legislatures banning the use of *sharia* or Muslim justice systems. Similar conflicts can be seen in African nations where large Christian populations live side-by-side with Muslim populations. What can we learn from early medieval Europe when it comes to facing such challenges?
 - Immigration: are there any lessons to be drawn from Rome's experiences with immigration. Could collapse have been prevented if the Romans worked to welcome and integrate newly arrived people groups? Could it have been managed more effectively? Or was there too much pressure on existing systems resulting from hundreds of thousands of new residents in Roman controlled lands? Consider Theodoric's policy of *civitas* (see page 54 of *The Medieval World*). Is this a workable option? What aspects, if any, of his policy would you change?



Augustine of Hippo

TOPICS COVERED: MIDDLE EASTERN LITERATURE,
THE SILK ROAD, TRADITION OF HOSPITALITY, THE
THREE MAJOR MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS:
JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND ISLAM

1. The literary work known as *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* is an ancient collection of stories. The original stories were part of an oral tradition of story telling that stretched back hundreds of years. The actual stories come from not only the Arab Peninsula but Africa, Persia, China, and India. Begin *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* by Geraldine McCaughrean and read Chapters 1-17.

2. The stories of Sinbad the Sailor relate the adventures of the Arabian traders who traveled great distances in search of silk, spices, and other precious cargo. These intrepid sailors made their way to India and China on small boats and were very skilled in the sciences of navigation and exploration. Their knowledge was much more advanced than their European counterparts, allowing them to control the spice and silk trades for centuries. To learn more about these ancient trading routes and see a map of the voyages the Arab sailors made, visit:

☞ <http://www.people.hofstra.edu/geotrans/eng/ch2en/conc2en/silkroad.html>

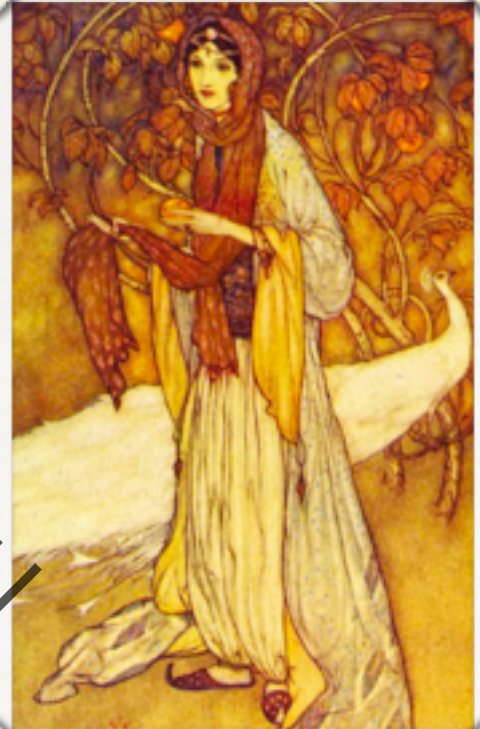
☞ <http://library.yale.edu/digitalcollections/yalesilkroad/index.html>

3. In addition to being a route of trade, the Silk Road was also a path for the movement of culture, religion, scientific advances, and much more. Research the history of the Silk Road and the ideas that were passed between cultures via the merchants and travelers on these roads. For instance, Buddhism was originally started in India but it made its way to China via the Silk Road. The numerical characters we use replaced Roman numerals once traders realized that the Arabic figures were much easier to use. What other ideas and beliefs have a history that is part of the Silk Road? The following website will prove helpful:

☞ <http://library.yale.edu/digitalcollections/yalesilkroad/index.html>

4. Mark the Silk Road and Arab sailing routes on your map of the world.

5. Continue to study the similarities and differences between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Choose one religion, preferably one you do not know very much about, and do a research project. Research the historical background, key leaders, sacred texts, rituals, holidays and festivals, and demographics. You could even try to interview someone from that faith and ask them about their practices and beliefs. If you do this, be sure to be respectful when asking your questions. A person's belief system is very important to them and this is an exercise to allow you to get to know more about another faith, not an opportunity to argue about the differences between religions. Record findings in your report and make a presentation to your family or classmates.



Shahrazad by Edmund Dulac, 1911

6. You may be interested to watch a PBS documentary on the rise and fall of Muslim Spain. It is available at the following link. *Warning: this film does contain violent reenactments of war scenes as well as scenes of martyrdom. It also contains references to religious tolerance and multicultural diversity some may find troubling.*

🔗 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HcXo8TcQgnE&feature=related>

ADDITIONAL WEBSITES:

More information on the stories of the *1001 Arabian Nights* is available here:

🔗 <http://www.candlelightstories.com/storybooks/the-arabian-nights/>

Timeline of events in the history of Islam:

🔗 <http://www.pbs.org/empires/islam/timeline.html>

HOSPITABLE TRADITIONS

The religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all share a mandate for hospitality. This comes through clearly in *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* as well as in stories from the Old Testament and Tanakh. Along with being a practice rooted in survival (turning a person away at your door in the dry and arid climates of the Middle East could easily result in his death) it is also rooted in the belief that in opening your home to a stranger you open it to God. Write a report on the hospitable traditions of the three religions. Consider the stories in *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights* where hospitality is rewarded and stories from the Old Testament such as Abraham entertaining the three strangers.

ANSWER KEY

Week 2

- 1a. Emperor Diocletian divided the empire between east and west to make it easier to rule. He appointed Maximian to rule the western half, while Diocletian continued to rule the eastern.
- b. Approximately 10%.
- c. Grammar, rhetoric, logic, music, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy.
- d. In Germanic law a wergild was “the price on a man’s head” or the amount owed to his family if he was murdered.

Week 3

- 1a. Cassiodorus.

Week 4

- 3a. Instead of taking over and allowing his soldiers to pillage, Umar allowed local governments to continue to function, paid his soldiers out of the increased tax revenues and allowed conquered people to keep their land and religion. His land and poll tax rates were often less than those of the former rulers, making many of his new subjects content to be conquered.
- b. Christians could not display crosses or their religious books in the roads or markets. They were also told to use their clappers softly in church and were not allowed to raise their voices when following their dead during funeral processions.
- c. Shiites favored leaders who were able to trace their lineage back to Muhammed. Sunnis were not as concerned with lineage and thought the ability to lead was more important.
- 4a. It was a mixture of tribal, Jewish, and Christian beliefs. They called God, Allah, made pilgrimages to Mecca and observed holy days.
- b. Christians believe that Jesus was the Son of God, not just a prophet. Jesus himself stated that he did not come to institute political change but spiritual redemption.

Week 7

- 2a. Nearly every country on the sea, with the exception of Northern France and Italy, had been attacked by the Moors or Arabs.
- b. It marked a pivotal defeat of the Muslim Moors. They had conquered Spain and were poised to take over more European lands. Their defeat by Charles Martel secured Christian rule in Europe. The Muslim invasions unified Europe and gave rise to the concept of Christendom. This cemented the growing rivalry between Christians and Muslims, a conflict that would emerge time and again over the next centuries.
- c. The Holy Roman Empire
- d. Carolingian minuscule was a new script. It introduced the use of upper and lower case letters, made each letter distinct and left breaks between words.
- e. A new sense among the people of Europe of belonging to a common state. This was evident in the profound sense among people of sharing a common religious, cultural, and political identity.
- 4c. He saw the variations of Christianity practiced throughout his empire as a threat to the unity of his empire. He also feared the acceptance of heathen practices into Christian worship. He felt that a common song book would help eliminate these variations.

GLOSSARY OF VOCABULARY WORDS

abase—to lower in rank, office, prestige, or esteem

absolve—pardon, forgive acclivities

accoutered—to have provided with equipment; to have outfitted

accoutrement—equipment, accessory

acquiesced—to have complied or accepted; to have submitted passively

adjudged—to have decided or ruled; to have pronounced

adjuration—a solemn oath

alack—expression of regret or sorrow

alacrity—speed, agility

almaçur—a member of the French nobility

anathema—one who is cursed by church authority; someone or thing intensely disliked

apostolic—relating to or in agreement with the teaching of the New Testament apostles

arbalest—a medieval crossbow

argosy—large ship or fleet of ships atrocious

atrocious—terrible, horrible

ballia—inner tower

ballium—a defensive wall, usually surrounding an outer court of a castle.

barbican—a defensive outpost, or fortified outwork, such as a castle

bawn—a rocking stretch of shore where fish are laid out to dry

begotten—to have created or made

beset—to attack on all sides; to assail

bezants—the gold currency of the Byzantine Empire, widely circulated in the Middle Ages

bias—a particular tendency or inclination, especially one that prevents unprejudiced consideration of a question; prejudice

blazon—to set for boldly, to display openly

boltered—covered by; stained

bothies—a small hut or cottage

bourns—burn or a bound, a limit as in a creek bank

brehon—a judge

caitiff—a despicable person

cajoled—persuaded by flattery or promises; wheedled, coaxed

calumny—a lie; a false or malicious statement; slander

canny—careful, prudent

canting—a tilt caused by motion

carousal—a noisy or drunken feast or social gathering

catechized—instructed in the doctrines of the Christian church

certes—certainly; in truth

cheek-hinged—jointed at the cheek

claymore—a two-handed sword with a two-sided blade used by Scottish Highlanders

coadjutor—an assistant or helper to a bishop

commiseration—to feel sorrow or sympathy for; to pity

compeer—an equal in rank or ability; a comrade

compunction—an uneasy feeling; a pang of conscience; remorse

compunctious—regretful

conciliate—to overcome distrust or hostility

conflagration—a destructive and/or extensive fire

connive—to conspire secretly

coronach—a dirge; a Scottish or Irish song for the dead

corpse-maker—something or someone who kills in great numbers

counterscarp—inner and outer sides of a ditch

cowed—frightened by show of force

crenellated—having battlements; notched

crenelles—notches scene in castle walls

culled—to pick or select; to be picked or selected

cyclopaedia—an encyclopedia

damascened—metalwork decorated with wavy patterns after damask material.

death-price—an amount paid to the family of someone killed or murdered in order to atone for the death.

declivity—a downward slope

descried—to have been detected; to have been denounced

desultory—inconsistent; fitful; disconnected

dialectics—the art or practice of logical discussion in the pursuit of truth

dirk—a dagger

donjon—the inner tower, keep, or stronghold of a castle

eglantine—a rose

egress—an exit; the act of leaving