**Chapter 7 Notes**

* After the collapse of Rome, Western Europe entered a period of political, social and economic decline. During this time it was politically divided, rural and largely cut off from advanced civilizations in the Middle East, China and India. This period has been called the Dark Ages.
* Greco-Roman, Germanic and Christian traditions slowly blended, creating a new civilization in this area. Much later this period between ancient times and modern times would be called the Middle Ages. Its culture would be called medieval civilization, from the Latin for “middle ages.”
* The Germanic tribes that conquered parts of the Roman Empire included the Goths, Vandals, Saxons and Franks. The Franks culture was very different from that of the Romans:
  + They were mostly farmers and herders, so they had no cities or written laws.
  + Instead, they lived in small communities governed by unwritten customs.
  + Kings were elected by tribal councils.
  + Warriors swore loyalty to the king in exchange for weapons and a share in the plunder taken from conquered people.
  + Clovis, king of the Franks, conquered the former Roman province of Gaul, which later became the kingdom of France. Clovis converted to Christianity. By doing this he earned the loyalty of his subjects in Gaul and he also gained a powerful ally in the pope, leader of the Christian Church of Rome.
* As the Franks and other Germanic tribes carved Europe into small kingdoms, a new power invaded.
  + Muslim armies overran Christian lands and crossed over into France.
  + Charles Martel rallied Frankish warriors.
  + At the Battle of Tours in 732, Christian warriors triumphed. To them this victory was a sign that God was on their side.
  + Muslim forces advanced no further, but maintained control of what is now Spain. This nearby Muslim presence remained a source of anxiety to many European Christian leaders.
* In 768, the grandson of Charles Martel became king of the Franks. He became known as Charlemagne or Charles the Great. He spent much of his 46-year reign fighting Muslims in Spain, Saxons in the north, Avars and Slavs in the east and Lombards in Italy. His conquests reunited much of the old western Roman Empire.
* In 799, Pope Leo III asked Charlemagne for help against the rebellious nobles in Rome. In exchange for his help, Pop Leo named Charlemagne Emperor of Rome. Charlemagne’s crowning ceremony had enormous significance: A Christian pope had crowned a Germanic king successor to the Roman emperors. By doing so, Pope Leo III revived the ideal of a united Christian community, which came to be called *Christendom*. At the same time, he also sowed the seeds for desperate power struggles between future popes and Germanic emperors.
* The pope’s action outraged the emperor of the eastern Roman empire in Constantinople. In the long run, the crowning of Charlemagne deepened the split between the eastern and western Christian worlds.
* Charlemagne worked to create a united Christian Europe.
  + He worked closely with the church to help spread Christianity to the conquered peoples on the fringes of the empire.
  + He appointed powerful nobles to rule local regions. To keep control of these leaders, he sent out officials called missi dominici to check on roads, listen to problems, and see that justice was done.
  + He regarded education as another way to unify his kingdom. He could read but not write. He still saw the need for officials to keep accurate records and write clear reports. He also encouraged the creation of local schools.
* After Charlemagne died in 814, his son Louis I took the throne. Then Louis’ sons battled for power. Finally in 843, Charlemagne’s grandsons drew up the Treaty of Verdun, which split the empire into 3 regions.
* Charlemagne left a lasting legacy: he extended Christian civilization into northern Europe and furthered the blending of Germanic , Roman and Christian traditions. He also set up strong, efficient governments. Later medieval rulers looked to his example when they tried to strengthen their own kingdoms.
* About 900, a new wave of nomadic people, the Magyars settled into present-day Hungary. From there they overran eastern Europe and moved on to plunder Germany, parts of France, and Italy.
* The Vikings lived in Scandinavia (present-day Denmark, Norway and Sweden). They were independent farmers ruled by land-owning chieftains and also expert sailors. Starting in the 700s, they left Scandinavia, looting and burning communities along the coasts and rivers of Europe.
  + The Vikings were not just destructive raiders, they were also traders and explorers who sailed around the Mediterranean Sea and across the Atlantic Ocean.
  + The Vikings opened trade routes that linked northern Europe to Mediterranean lands. They also settled England, Ireland, northern France, and parts of Russia.

**Section 2**

* In the face of invasions by the Vikings, Muslims and Magyars, kings and emperors were too weak to maintain law and order. People needed protection for themselves, their homes and their land. In response to this basic need for protection, a new political and economic structure evolved known as feudalism.
  + Feudalism was a loosely organized system of rule in which powerful local lords divided their landholdings among lesser lords, called vassals, pledged service and loyalty to the greater lord.
  + The political and economic relationship between lords and vassals was based on the exchange of land for loyalty and military service.
  + It was established by custom and tradition and by an exchange of pledges known as the feudal contract. Under this, a powerful lord granted his vassal a fief, or estate. Fiefs included land, peasants to work the land and any towns or buildings located on the land.
  + As part of this agreement, the lord promised to protect his vassal. In return, the vassal pledged loyalty to his lord. He also agreed to provide the lord with 40 days of military service each year, certain money payments and advice.
* All aristocrats (members of the nobility) had a place in this structure of power:
  + Monarchs were at the top
  + Powerful lords, such as dukes and counts, were next and they held the large fiefs. Each of these lords had vassals and these vassals in turn had vassals of their own.
  + Because vassals often held fiefs from more than one lord, relationships between them became very complex. WHY? A vassal who had pledged loyalty to several lords could have serious problems if his overlords quarreled with each other.
* For medieval nobles, warfare was a way of life. Rival lords battled constantly for power. Many nobles began training in boyhood for a future occupation as a knight, or mounted warrior:
  + At the age of 7, a boy slated to become a knight was sent away to the castle of his father’s lord. There he learned to
    - Ride
    - Fight
    - to keep his armor and weapons in good condition. Training was difficult and discipline was strict.
* When his training was finished, the young man was dubbed a knight, often in a public ceremony.
* Knights usually fought on horseback using swords, axes and lances (long poles). They wore armor and carried shields for protection. Other soldiers fought on foot using daggers, spears, crossbows and longbows.
* In addition to actual warfare, knights engaged in mock battles called tournaments.
* During the Middle Ages, powerful lords fortified their homes to withstand attack. Monarchs and nobles owned huge stone castles with high walls, towers and drawbridges over wide moats.
  + These castles were not only homes for the lords, they were also fortresses.
  + The knights who defended the castle also lived there.
  + In times of war, peasants in nearby villages would take refuge within castle walls.
  + Wars often centered on seizing castles that command strategic river crossings, harbors or mountain passes.
* Noblewomen played active roles in this warrior society. HOW? While her husband or father was off fighting, the “lady of the manor” took over his duties supervising vassals, managing the household, and performing necessary agricultural and medical tasks. She might even go to war to defend her estate.
  + Eleanor of Aquitaine was a leading force in European politics for more than 50 years. (P. 222)
* Women’s rights to inheritance were restricted under the feudal system.
* Land generally passed to the eldest son in the family. A woman frequently received land as part of her dowry, and fierce marriage negotiations surrounded an unmarried or widowed heiress. Widows retained their land.
* In the later Middle Ages, knights adopted a code of conduct called chivalry which required knights to:
  + - Be brave, loyal and true to their word
    - Fight fair in war
    - Treat a captured knight well or even release hi m if he promised to pay his ransom
  + The rules of chivalry only applied to nobles, not commoners
  + Chivalry also dictated that knights protect the weak, including both peasants and noblewomen. This placed women on a pedestal. Troubadours, wandering musicians, sang about the brave deeds of knights and their devotion to women.
  + Few real knights could live up to the ideals of chivalry, but it was important because it did provide a standard against which a knight’s behavior could be measured.
* The heart of the feudal economy was the manor, or lord’s estate. Most manors included one or more villages and the surrounding lands.
  + Peasants who made up the majority of the population in medieval society lived and worked on the manor.
  + Most peasants on a manor were serfs, meaning they were not slaves who could be bought or sold, but yet they were not free. They could leave the manor without the lord’s permission.
* Peasants and their lords were tied together by mutual rights and obligations:
  + Peasants had to
    - work several days a week farming the lord’s lands
    - repair his bridges, roads, and fences
    - ask the lords’ permission to marry
    - pay the lord a fee when they inherited their father’s acres or when they used the local mill to grind grain
  + In return, peasants
    - Had the right to farm some of the land for themselves
    - Were entitled to their lord’s protections from raids and war
    - could not force off the land by lords
* In theory, peasants were guaranteed food, shelter and land
* This system supported the nobility and made feudalism possible
* For most peasants, life was hard.
  + Men, women and children worked long hours—from sunup to sundown
  + Disease took a heavy toll and most peasants didn’t live past 35
  + Peasants ate a very simple diet of bread and vegetables. No meat because it was reserved for the lord.
  + Peasant families slept in a hut together with their livestock
  + Peasants had one week off of work at Christmas and one week off at Easter

**Section 4**

* Changes in Europe by 1000 set the foundation for economic prosperity. It began with peasants adopting new farming technologies that made their fields more productive. *What did this technology look like?*
  + Peasants began using iron plows that carved deep into the heavy soil of northern Europe. These plows were an improvement over wooden plows.
  + Also, they began using a new type of harness, allowing them to use horses instead of oxen to pull the plows. Faster moving horses could plow more land in a day than oxen could, so peasants could enlarge their fields and plant more crops.
  + Peasants also began rotating crops on a three-field system. They planted one field with grain; a second with beans; and the third they left unplanted. This new system left only 1/3 of the land unplanted, rather than ½.
* All these improvements allowed farmers to produce more food. With more food available, the population began to grow.
* As Europe’s population grew, other changes also took place:
  + Feudal warfare and foreign invasions declined so people felt safer to travel. This caused trade to increase.
  + This increase in trade caused more cities and towns to be established.
    - As trade fairs closed in the autumn, merchants began choosing to wait out the winter nearby rather than making the long travel home.
    - They began settling together in villages and some had as many as 10,000 in population.
    - To protect their interests, the merchants who set up a new town asked the local lord, or the king himself, for a charter, which is a written document that set out the rights and privileges of the town.
    - In return, merchants paid the lord of the king a large sum of money.
* As trade revived, the use of money increased. In time, the need for capital, or money for investment, stimulated the growth of banking houses. Merchants also extended credit to one another, meaning they arranged to delay payment for goods for a certain set time.
* This use of money is important because it undermined serfdom. HOW? Feudal lords needed money to buy fine goods. As a result many peasants began selling farm products to the townspeople and paying rent to their lords in cash rather than labor. This led to a rise in tenant farmers, who paid rent for their land.
* By the year 1000, merchants, artisans and traders formed a new social class called the middle class. Why was it called this? In status, this class ranked between nobles and peasants.
* In medieval towns, the middle class gained economic and political power. HOW?
  + Merchants and artisans formed associations known as guilds.
    - Merchant guilds appeared first. They dominated town life, passing laws, levying taxes, deciding how to spend town funds.
    - In time, artisans organized craft guilds. Each guild represented workers in one occupation.
  + Guild members cooperated to protect their own economic interests. *What did guilds do?* Guilds made rules to protect the quality of their goods, regulate hours of labor, and set prices. They also provided social services such as running hospitals, looking after the needs of their members and providing support for the widows and orphans of their members.
  + Becoming a guild member took many years of hard work:
    - At the age of 7 or 8 a child might become an apprentice, or trainee, to a guild master.
    - The apprentice usually spent 7 years learning the trade.
    - Few apprentices ever became guild masters unless they were related to one. Most worked for guild members as journeymen, or salaried workers.
  + *Why were guilds important in town life?*
    - They played a large role in town government, levied taxes and made improvements that benefited the whole town.