

The Middle Ages

Lesson 5



MAIN IDEAS

1. The Christian Church shaped both society and politics in medieval Europe.
2. Orders of monks and friars did not like the church's political nature.
3. Church leaders helped build the first universities in Europe.
4. The church influenced the arts in medieval Europe.

Key Terms and People

clergy church officials

religious order group of people who dedicate their lives to religion and follow common rules

Francis of Assisi founder of the Franciscan order

friars members of religious orders who lived and worked among the general public

Thomas Aquinas philosopher who showed how religious faith and reason could coexist

natural law Thomas Aquinas's concept that God created a law that governed how the world operated

Lesson Summary

THE CHURCH SHAPES SOCIETY AND POLITICS

The **clergy**, church officials, were very influential in medieval European culture and politics. For many people in the European Middle Ages, life revolved around the local church. Markets, festivals, and religious ceremonies all took place there. Some people made pilgrimages, or journeys to religious locations.

The church owned a lot of land in Europe because many people left their property to the church when they died. In this way the church became a major feudal lord. Of all the clergy, bishops and abbots were most involved in political matters. They often advised local rulers.

How did the church become a feudal lord during the Middle Ages?

Lesson 5, *continued*

MONKS AND FRIARS

Some people thought that the church was becoming too involved with politics. The French monks of Cluny established a new **religious order**. They dedicated their lives to religion and followed a strict schedule of worship. Other new orders followed. Women created religious communities in convents. Most monks lived apart from society, but two new religious orders developed for those who wanted to live, work, and teach among people. These were the Dominicans, started by Dominic de Guzmán, and the Franciscans, started by **Francis of Assisi**. The members of these orders were called **friars**.

Underline the sentence that explains why the monks of Cluny established a new religious order.

How were the Dominicans and Franciscans different from the orders who lived in monasteries?

UNIVERSITIES ARE BUILT

Europe's first universities were built by the church. Religion, law, medicine, and philosophy were taught. Scholars wanted to establish a connection between religious faith and human reason. The Dominican friar **Thomas Aquinas** wrote a reasoned argument for the existence of God. He also developed a philosophical system called **natural law** to show how God had ordered the world.

Why did Thomas Aquinas write about the existence of God?

THE CHURCH AND THE ARTS

In the 1100s Europeans built great Gothic cathedrals that are beautiful architectural achievements. They were symbols of people's faith. Everything, including the high ceilings and stained glass windows, were designed to show respect for God. Everything inside the church, from the clergy's robes to the books used, were works of art.

Why do you think so much medieval European art was made for the church?

Lesson 5, *continued*

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Draw Conclusions Which medieval religious people do you agree with the most—those involved in politics, the monks who left society, or the friars who believed in working among the people? Write a one-page paper defending your views.

DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

1. As a young man, _____ gave all of his possessions away and began preaching and tending to people who were poor or ill. **(Francis of Assisi/Thomas Aquinas)**
2. _____, according to Thomas Aquinas, is created by God and governs how the world operates. **(Natural law/Religious order)**
3. Journeys to religious locations are also referred to as _____. **(friars/pilgrimages)**
4. Dominican philosopher _____ believed reason and faith could work together. **(Francis of Assisi/Thomas Aquinas)**
5. The _____, or church officials, and their teachings were very influential in European culture and politics. **(friars/clergy)**
6. A group of people who dedicate their lives to religion and follow common rules is a _____. **(clergy/religious order)**
7. _____ were people who belonged to religious orders but lived and worked among the general public. **(Friars/Clergy)**