

The Crusades:

Excerpts from each Crusades

1095: Pope's Call for Crusade Embraced by Some Christians

The Byzantine emperor Alexius I urgently asked Pope Urban II for Christian knights to help him fight the Seljuk Turks. Although Roman popes and Byzantine emperors were longtime rivals, Urban agreed stating:

“From Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople comes a grievous report...an accursed race...has violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. The noble race of Franks must come to the aid of their fellow Christians in the East. The infidel Turks are advancing into the heart of Eastern Christendom; Christians are being oppressed and attacked; churches and holy places are being defiled. Pilgrims are harassed and even prevented access to the Holy Land. The West must march to the defense of the East. Both knights and footmen, both rich and poor...strive to help expel [the Seljuk Turks] from our Christian lands before it is too late... Remission of sins will be granted to those going thither. Let none hesitate; they must march next summer. Christ commands it!”

The pope promised forgiveness of sins and entrance into the kingdom of heaven for anyone who died in the Crusades. Serfs could obtain freedom from their lords. Citizens who enlisted were freed from paying taxes. Those who owed debts were allowed to pay them back without additional fees. Prisoners were released from jails, and sentences of death were commuted to life service in Palestine.

Processing questions:

1. Why did the Crusades start?
2. How does Pope Urban II view the Seljuk Turks and the Muslim community? Use specific words from above.
3. By 1096, thousands of knights were on their way to the Holy Land. What were motivations for Western Europeans to fight in the Crusades?
4. What do you think Urban II hoped to gain from the Crusades?

The First Crusade, 1096-1099:

First Crusade Results in Bloody Capture of Jerusalem

At the urging of Pope Urban II in 1095, the First Crusade succeeded in taking Jerusalem and was the most successful from the European point of view. When Jerusalem fell in 1099, Crusaders massacred and disgraced the dead bodies of 70,000 Muslims and Jews who were living there. An eyewitness stated: "In fact Jerusalem was taken from the north on the morning of Friday July 15, 1099. The population was put to the sword by the [Crusaders]. In the [mosque near the summit of the city, the Crusaders] slaughtered more than 70,000 people, among them a large number of Imams and Muslim scholars, devout men who had left their homelands to live lives of [holy] seclusion in the Holy Place." Then the leaders divided up the land into territories, each governed by a European feudal lord.

Below is an account from a Jewish man, Solomon bar Simson, about the First Crusade.

In the year four thousand eight hundred and fifty-six (1096 in the Christian calendar), one thousand twenty eight of our exile...inflicted upon the Jewish people were the many evils related in all the admonitions. At this time an arrogant people, a people of strange speech, a nation bitter and impetuous, Frenchmen and Germans, set out for the Holy City, which had been desecrated by barbaric nations, there to seek their house of idolatry and banish the [Jews] and other citizens of the land and conquer the land for themselves. They decorated themselves prominently with their signs, placing a profane symbol - a horizontal line over a vertical one - on the vestments of every man and woman whose heart yearned to go on the stray path to the grave of their Messiah.

When the Jewish communities became aware of their intention, they resorted to the custom of our ancestors, repentance, prayer, and charity. The hands of the Holy Nation turned faint at this time, their hearts melted, and their strength flagged. They hid in their innermost rooms to escape the swirling sword. They subjected themselves to great endurance, abstaining from food and drink for three consecutive days and nights, and then fasting many days from sunrise to sunset, until their skin was shriveled and dry as wood upon their bones. And they cried out loudly and bitterly to God.

That year, Passover fell on Thursday, and the New Moon of the following month, Iyar, fell on Friday and the Sabbath. On the eighth day of Iyar, on the Sabbath, the foe attacked the community of Speyer and murdered eleven holy souls who sanctified their Creator on the holy Sabbath and refused to defile themselves by adopting the faith of their foe.

Processing questions:

1. How could the actions of the First Crusaders cause future conflicts or problems?

2. What was the result of the First Crusade?

*The Second Crusade, 1146-1148:
Louis VII and Conrad III Lead Failed Second Crusade-Return Home Disgraced*

The Second Crusade started when Europeans lost control of Edessa, territory that they had previously controlled, to the Muslims. Led by King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany, the Europeans failed to regain any land and the Crusade was a failure from a European point of view. 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. In 1187, the Muslim leader Saladin prepared to try to take Jerusalem back from the Christians:

"If God blesses us by enabling us to drive His enemies out of Jerusalem, how fortunate and happy we would be! For Jerusalem has been controlled by the enemy for ninety-one years, during which time God has received nothing from us here in the way of adoration. At the same time, the zeal of the Muslim rulers to deliver it languished. Time passed, and so did many [in different] generations, while the Franks succeeded in rooting themselves strongly there. Now God has reserved the merit of its recovery for one house, the house of the sons of Ayyub [Saladin's family], in order to unite all hearts in appreciation of its members."

Processing questions:

1. What reasons does Saladin give for retaking Jerusalem? What arguments does he use to inspire his listeners? Highlight or underline those argument above, and expand on them below.

2. What are the similarities and differences between the arguments Pope Urban II and Saladin use to persuade their listeners?

*The Third Crusade, 1189-1192:
Richard's Crusade for Jerusalem Ends in an Agreement*

The Third Crusade was a response to Jerusalem's fall in 1187 to Salah al-Din (Saladin). Three great armies from Europe were led by Richard the Lion-hearted of England, Philip II of France, and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Europe's greatest warrior. However, Frederick accidentally drowned, the other two kings quarreled, and the whole Crusade failed from a European point of view. The Third Crusade, while not as effective as the First Crusade, was the first significant gain (or reclaiming) of territory by the Christian Crusaders in 100 years. Richard signed a three-year truce with Saladin. 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.

1. Why do you think Richard and Saladin signed a truce? What do you think they hoped to accomplish?

*The Fourth Crusade, 1202-1204:
The Capture of Constantinople*

Easily the most shameful of all the Crusades, the Fourth Crusade ended with no gains in the Holy Lands, but it captured a small Greek town on the Adriatic Sea, and twice-sacked Constantinople. Instead of going to Jerusalem, the Fourth Crusade went to the Byzantine Empire's capital, Constantinople, for various reasons. The European armies looted (robbed) the city and overthrew the Byzantine emperor. A resident of Constantinople describes how crusaders attacked the city during the Fourth Crusade: "And so the streets, squares, houses of two and three stories, sacred places, nunneries, houses for nuns and monks, sacred churches, even the Great Church of God and the imperial palace, were filled with [European crusaders], all of them maddened by war and murderous in spirit, all clad in armor and bearing spears, swords and lances, as they [robbed] the sacred places and trampled on the divine things [and] ran riot over the holy vessels. ... Moreover, they tore children from their mothers and mothers from their children, fearing neither God's anger nor man's vengeance." The main outcomes of the Fourth Crusade were to deepen the division between Greek and Latin Christianity and to hasten the Byzantine Empire's decline.

Below is an account of the Fourth Crusade by Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates:

... How shall I begin to tell of the deeds wrought by these nefarious men! Alas, the images, which ought to have been adored, were trodden under foot! Alas, the relics of the holy martyrs were thrown into unclean places! Then was seen what one shudders to hear, namely, the divine body and blood of Christ was spilled upon the ground or thrown about. They snatched the precious reliquaries, thrust into their bosoms the ornaments which these contained, and used the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups, -precursors of Anti-Christ, authors and heralds of his nefarious deeds which we momentarily expect. Manifestly, indeed, by that race then, just as formerly, Christ was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.

Nor can the violation of the Great Church [note: Hagia Sophia] be listened to with equanimity. For the sacred altar, formed of all kinds of precious materials and admired by the whole world, was broken into bits and distributed among the soldiers, as was all the other sacred wealth of so great and infinite splendor.

When the sacred vases and utensils of unsurpassable art and grace and rare material, and the fine silver, wrought with gold, which encircled the screen of the tribunal and the ambo, of admirable workmanship, and the door and many other ornaments, were to be borne away as booty, mules and saddled horses were led to the very sanctuary of the temple. Some of these which were unable to keep their footing on the splendid and slippery pavement, were stabbed when they fell, so that the sacred pavement was polluted with blood and filth.

Processing questions:

1. How was the Fourth Crusade different from the first three?

2. Why was the Fourth Crusade considered shameful?

Causes of the Crusades

CAUSES	Religious, Political, Cultural or Economic?
The desire to take control of Jerusalem away from Muslims.	
The belief that fighting in a crusade would give you forgiveness of sins.	
The chance to travel and make money.	
The desire to defend the Byzantine empire from Turks.	
The opportunity for younger sons of European nobles to get new land.	
The possibility of opening up new trade routes between Europe and the Middle East.	
To restore the right of Christians to make pilgrimages to the holy shrines in Jerusalem.	
To gain some of the fabulous riches of the East.	
To reunify the Orthodox and Latin branches of the Church under the Pope.	

Effects of the Crusades

EFFECTS	Religious, Political, Cultural or Economic?
Stimulated trade, introduced new products and technology, architecture, and the growing urban culture	
Led directly to the Turkish wars and expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans	
Expanded use of a money economy.	
Hardened Muslim attitudes towards Christians.	
Weakened Feudalism	
Transmitted Islamic science, philosophy, and medicine to the West	
Curious Europeans left to explore far-off places such as India and China. Broadened contacts with the Muslim world	
Increased the power of the monarchs. Rulers won new rights to collect taxes in order to support the Crusades.	

Perspectives of the Crusades

Directions: Reading through the following sources, pay attention to and take note of the characteristics of the Crusades. Pay special attention to how different sources present the Crusades.

Source #1: WESTERN EUROPEAN: Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres, Crusader

Excerpt from a letter to his Wife Adele; Antioch, March 29

Count Stephen to Adele, his sweetest and most amiable wife, to his dear children, and to all his vassals of all ranks - his greeting and blessing,

You may be very sure, dearest, that the messenger whom I sent to give you pleasure, left me before Antioch safe and unharmed and through God's grace in the greatest prosperity. And already at that time, together with all the chosen army of Christ, endowed with great valor by Him, we had been continuously advancing for twenty-three weeks toward the home of our Lord Jesus. You may know for certain, my beloved, that of gold, silver and many other kind of riches I now have twice as much as your love had assigned to me when I left you. For all our princes, with the common consent of the whole army, against my own wishes, have made me up to the present time the leader, chief and director of their whole expedition.

You have certainly heard that after the capture of the city of Nicaea we fought a great battle with the ^{deceitful;} perfidious ^{untrustworthy} Turks and by God's aid conquered them. Next we conquered for the Lord all Romania and afterwards Cappadocia. And we learned that there was a certain Turkish prince Assam, dwelling in Cappadocia; thither we directed our course. All his castles we conquered by force and compelled him to flee to a certain very strong castle situated on a high rock. We also gave the land of that Assam to one of our chiefs and in order that he might conquer the above-mentioned Assam, we left there with him many soldiers of Christ. Thence, continually following the wicked Turks, we drove them through the midst of Armenia, as far as the great river Euphrates. Having left all their baggage and beasts of burden on the bank, they fled across the river into Arabia.

(Source: Dana C. Munro, "Letters of the Crusaders", Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, Vol 1:4, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1896), 5-8)

1. What can you learn about the Crusades from this excerpt? Think who/what/when/where/why/how, etc.
2. Who is his intended audience? How might that *impact* what he is saying and how he is saying it?
3. What is his perspective on the Crusades? How does he view them? Why does he have that view?

Source #3: SOUTHWEST ASIA: The Crusades through Arab Eyes

Excerpt from "The Cannibals of Ma'arra" in The Crusades Through Arab Eyes, by Amin Maalouf

"The Franks arrived at dawn. It was carnage. As Ibn al-Athir described, 'for three days they put people to the sword, killing more than a hundred thousand people and taking many prisoners...In Ma'arra our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking-pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled.' While some of these descriptions might be a bit exaggerated, the people of the towns and villages near Ma'arra would never forget what they had seen and heard. The memory of these atrocities, preserved and transmitted by local poets and oral tradition, shaped an image of the Frank that would not easily fade. The chronicler Usamah Ibn Munquidh, born in the neighboring city of Shayzar three years before these events, would one day write,

'All those who were well-informed about the Franks saw them as beasts superior in courage and fighting ardour but in nothing else, just as animals are superior in strength and aggression.'
This unkind assessment accurately reflects the impression made by the Franks upon their arrival in Syria: they aroused a mixture of fear and contempt, quite understandable on the part of an Arab nation which, while far superior in culture had lost all combative spirit. The Turks would never forget the cannibalism of the Occidentals. Throughout their epic literature, the Franks are invariably described as [cannibals]."

**important note: "Franks" is a term used to describe the Europeans in the Arab world. To the Arabs, the wars between 1096 and 1204 were referred not as Crusades, but as "the Frankish Wars" or "the Frankish invasions."*

1. What can you learn about the Crusades from this excerpt? Think who/what/when/where/why/how, etc.
2. What is his perspective on the Crusades? How does he view them? Why does he have that view?
3. Why do Europeans call these conflicts "the Crusades," while Arabs call them "Frankish Wars" or "Frankish invasions"? Explain at least one reason for the difference.