The Middle Ages

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. Between which two broad periods do historians commonly place the European Middle Ages?

A. Classical antiquity and the Renaissance
B. The Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution
C. The Bronze Age and classical antiquity
D. The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution

Correct answer: A. Classical antiquity and the Renaissance

The conventional term describes centuries between the ancient Roman world and the early modern period. The timing of that transition varied by region.

2. Before printing spread in Europe, what work in some monasteries helped texts survive?

A. Photographing every page
B. Broadcasting lectures by radio
C. Copying manuscripts by hand
D. Typing duplicate pages with carbon paper

Correct answer: C. Copying manuscripts by hand

Scribes produced new handwritten copies that could be read, studied, and copied again.

3. Which activity could a dependent peasant owe a lord on a medieval manor?

A. A yearly vote for a national parliament
B. Days of work on the lord’s land
C. A share of overseas factory profits
D. A payment for full ownership of the manor

Correct answer: B. Days of work on the lord’s land

A peasant household could cultivate land for its own use while owing labor or other dues to the lord of the manor.

4. Which ruler appears on the early medieval timeline as the Carolingian emperor crowned in 800?

A. Edward I of England
B. Alfred the Great
C. William of Normandy
D. Charlemagne

Correct answer: D. Charlemagne

Charlemagne ruled the Franks and was crowned emperor by Pope Leo III in 800.

5. In the name motte-and-bailey castle, what is the motte?

A. An enclosed courtyard
B. A raised mound
C. A gatehouse
D. A drawbridge

Correct answer: B. A raised mound
A motte is the elevated mound. The bailey is the adjoining enclosed area.

6. How were the images on the linen of the Bayeux Tapestry made?

A. They were embroidered with thread.
B. They were printed from carved wooden blocks.
C. They were painted on with egg tempera.
D. They were woven as part of the original linen cloth.

Correct answer: A. They were embroidered with thread.
The figures and scenes were stitched onto linen that already existed. The familiar name has survived even though the work is technically embroidery.

7. A medieval manuscript begins with a large letter A filled with a painted scene. Which term best describes that letter?

A. A marginal catchword
B. An index entry
C. A colophon
D. An illuminated initial

Correct answer: D. An illuminated initial
The Met catalogue describes an Italian example as an illuminated initial showing the Resurrection. The enlarged letter marks the start of a passage.

8. What did the medieval Hanseatic League help merchants do across northern Europe?

A. Choose one emperor for all European kingdoms
B. Standardize teaching at every university
C. Protect shared trading privileges and maintain commercial links
D. Replace merchant ships with land-only routes

Correct answer: C. Protect shared trading privileges and maintain commercial links
Merchants and towns in the Hanse built a trading network whose members cooperated to defend access and privileges.

9. What happened to Córdoba’s Great Mosque in 1236?

A. It was dedicated as a Christian cathedral.
B. It became a chartered law school.
C. It became the royal palace of the Frankish kings.
D. It was converted into a market for Hanseatic merchants.

Correct answer: A. It was dedicated as a Christian cathedral.
The site’s history records its construction and expansion as a mosque. It was dedicated for Christian worship after the city’s capture in 1236.

10. Which academic subject helped Bologna become a major study center around the start of its university tradition?

A. Music
B. Medicine
C. Astronomy
D. Law

Correct answer: D. Law
Bologna’s university grew around the study of law. Its early schools included both Roman law and canon law.

11. Which two church centers were at the heart of the split commonly dated to 1054?

A. Venice and Florence
B. Paris and London
C. Rome and Constantinople
D. Dublin and Edinburgh

Correct answer: C. Rome and Constantinople
The split involved the papacy at Rome and the patriarchate of Constantinople. The division developed over centuries.

12. Why does the U.S. National Archives label its copy of Magna Carta 1297 if King John first issued the charter in 1215?

A. The charter was written in 1297 and assigned a fictional earlier date.
B. The displayed copy is a later reissue entered into England’s statute rolls.
C. The copy is a new compilation of laws from both dates.
D. The date records when King John took the throne.

Correct answer: B. The displayed copy is a later reissue entered into England’s statute rolls.
Later monarchs reissued the charter. The displayed document represents the 1297 version that became part of England’s statute law.

13. After the Black Death reduced the population, why could some European workers ask for higher wages?

A. Most workers had suddenly finished university training.
B. Food prices were permanently identical across Europe.
C. European kings abolished every existing wage law.
D. Employers had fewer workers available and had to compete for labor.

Correct answer: D. Employers had fewer workers available and had to compete for labor.
A smaller labor supply gave some surviving workers more leverage. England’s Statute of Labourers tried to curb resulting wage demands.

14. Which two kingdoms were the main rivals in the Hundred Years’ War?

A. England and France
B. Portugal and Sweden
C. Scotland and Denmark
D. Castile and Norway

Correct answer: A. England and France
English and French rulers contested claims to the French crown and control of territory over a series of conflicts.

15. Which event came last: the coronation of Charlemagne, the Norman conquest depicted at Bayeux, King John’s first charter, or the English statute responding to labor shortages?

A. The Norman conquest of England
B. King John’s first Magna Carta
C. England’s Statute of Labourers
D. Charlemagne’s coronation as emperor

Correct answer: C. England’s Statute of Labourers
The four dates are 800, 1066, 1215, and 1351 in the order given in the question. The Statute of Labourers came last.