BEFORE YOU READ
In the last section, you read how the Crusades lessened the power of feudal lords. In this lesson you will learn about events in Europe that weakened feudalism even more.

AS YOU READ
As you read Lesson 3, use a chart like the one below to list each main idea and details about it.

The Plague
(pages 333–334)
How did the bubonic plague affect Europe in the 1300s?
In the 1300s the bubonic plague struck Europe. Before the end of the century, this deadly disease had killed about one-third of all Europeans and tens of millions of people worldwide.

The plague reached Europe in 1347. A trading ship brought the disease to Italy. From there it spread along European trade routes to France, Germany, and England.

A bacteria carried by fleas caused the plague. Infected fleas attached themselves to rats. From rats the fleas jumped to people. When fleas bit humans, people quickly became sick. About half of those who got the disease died, usually within days.

The plague caused a sharp drop in population in Europe. The loss of so many people upset daily life and made the world seem less orderly and safe. The drop in population also affected the economy. Europe had fewer workers. In many places workers were so scarce that laborers demanded and got much higher pay for their work.

1. What were two ways the plague affected Europe?

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The Hundred Years’ War
(pages 335–336)

Who fought in the Hundred Years’ War?
The Hundred Years’ War lasted more than a hundred years from 1337 to 1453. France fought England. The war was not one long battle but a series of shorter conflicts. At times the fighting stopped because of peace agreements, the plague, and other events.

The war had many causes. The king of France wanted control of land in southern France claimed by the king of England. The French king made the English angry by arresting English merchants and interfering with England’s trade with the continent. Fighting began in 1337 after the English king declared himself the true king of France. He based his claim to the French throne on the fact that he was nephew of the last French king.

At first the war went well for the England. The English won several major battles. By 1422 their armies had gained control of much of France. In 1429, however, the war turned in France’s favor. Led by Joan of Arc, the French defeated the English in a battle at Orleans. Inspired by this victory, the French fought harder. By 1453, they had forced the English out of France, ending the war.

Before the Hundred Years’ War, knights on horseback fought each other face-to-face with swords, axes, and lances. During the war, new weapons changed the way armies fought. With the long bow an archer could shoot large arrows at the enemy from great distances. French soldiers found new uses for the gunpowder invented by the Chinese. On the battlefield, they won many battles by firing artillery, large guns loaded with gunpowder.

2. What new weapons were used in the Hundred Years’ War?

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Early Modern Europe Emerges
(pages 336–337)

How did social and political structures of Medieval Europe change?

Part of how historians define the end of the Middle Ages is the end of feudalism.

European towns grew and sought more stability. Strong monarchies could provide stability and towns became centers of support for the monarchies.

After the Hundred Years’ War, monarchies in Europe grew stronger. The French king no longer had to worry about the English king claiming his throne. The French Monarchy would eventually become the best example of an absolute monarchy.

New ideas about learning, science, and art would lead to the European Renaissance.

3. How did life change during the Middle Ages?

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Reading Study Guide continued