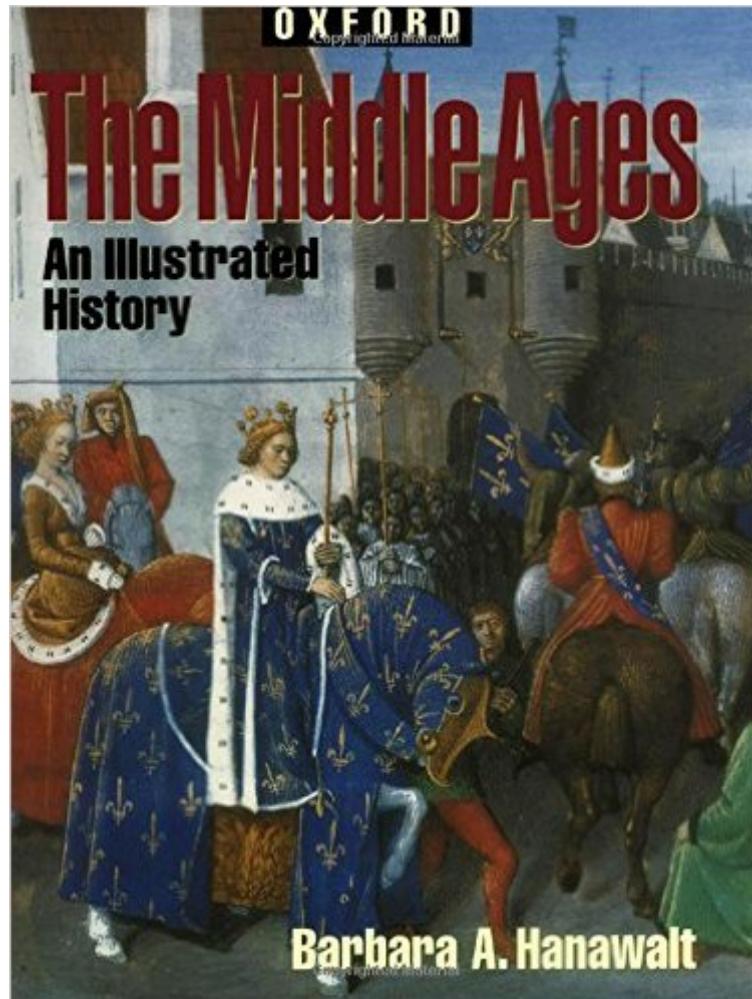


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The Middle Ages: An Illustrated History (Oxford Illustrated History)



Synopsis

A brisk narrative of battles and plagues, monastic orders, heroic women, and knights-errant, barbaric tortures and tender romance, intrigue, scandals, and conquest, *The Middle Ages: An Illustrated History* mixes a spirited and entertaining writing style with exquisite, thorough scholarship. Barbara A. Hanawalt, a renowned medievalist, launches her story with the often violent amalgamation of Roman, Christian, and Germanic cultures following the destruction and pillaging of the crown jewel of the Roman Empire—the great city of Rome. The story moves on to the redrawn map of Europe, in which power players like Byzantium and the newly-established Frankish kingdom begin a precarious existence in a "sea of tribes" (in the words of a contemporary). Savage people—the bloodthirsty Germans, the wild Visigoths and Ostrogoths, the fierce Anglo-Saxons, and the Slavs to the East—as well as the sophisticated and ever-expanding Arabs threaten each other's borders, invade cities and have their own cities sacked, fight victorious battles and get conquered in turn. Hanawalt charts the spread of Christianity in Europe, maps out the trail of misery and mayhem the Crusades left in their wake, explains feudalism and Church reform, familiarizes us with the astrolabe and the masterpieces of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, tracks the progress of the Hundred Years' War, and brings great historical figures—such as Charlemagne, King Henry II, Joan of Arc, Dante, and Justinian—to life. Spanning the millennium between the fifth and the fifteenth centuries, *The Middle Ages: An Illustrated History* captures the major historical and political events in great depth and clarity, but never loses sight of the plain and often-overlooked facts of life as lived by peasants and townsfolk, kings and monks, men and women. Hanawalt offers fascinating tidbits on diverse facets of medieval society, from herbal medical cures to table etiquette and drinking habits, from tabloid-worthy court scandals to a unique listing of the rules of a monastic order. She examines rare texts—from illuminated manuscripts to Carolingian minuscule—and takes us inside the awe-inspiring Hagia Sofia in Constantinople. Barbara Hanawalt makes use of eclectic source material, including inscriptions, chronicles, artifacts, and literature, from the Koran to the Scriptures, and from Omar Khayyam to the Goliardic poems. Fascinating stories—like that of the discovery of the burial site of an Anglo-Saxon chieftain which contained, among other treasures, an entire 86-foot long ship—are interspersed among the chronicles of great historical upheavals. The author takes a sweeping approach to the subject, building a comprehensive, animated portrait of every aspect of life in that period by including material on women's place in medieval society, agriculture, art and literature, religion and superstitions, philosophy, and weaponry. Lavishly illustrated with art, photographs, documents, artifacts, and maps, *The Middle Ages* also includes a glossary, index, chronology, and suggestions for further reading. A collection of lavishly illustrated

single-volume histories, Oxford Illustrated Histories present well-documented chronologies on topics like Britain, theater, Greece, opera, English literature, modern Europe, and more. Each history includes color and black and white illustrations, as well as photographs, and is compiled by a taskforce of leading scholars in its respective field of interest. These titles are ideal for any casual reader and also, because of the scholarship, serve as companions to any budding researcher's reference collection.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

We all enjoy history (almost any period, almost anywhere in the world) in our family, but I found my memory of the Middle Ages more lacking that I care to admit when I was preparing to teach that period in history to our homeschooled 8-year old. We love "The Story of the World: History for the Classical Child" series by Susan Wise Bauer (both the hardcover readers and the enormous softcover supplements), but wanted more since our daughter is a very intelligent 8-year old. This book fit the bill perfectly, both for me to pre-read, and later to read parts of with our daughter. The book takes a brisk tour of the Middle Ages. While it is very readable, it is not for the reader in a hurry (unless, unlike me, you find you learned far more than you thought in secondary school and university). I found myself reviewing a few pages backward each time I picked it up to read more, in

order to keep the information more firmly at hand. Chapters are good lengths, interesting illustrations are many, and the photos and illustrations are of good color and clarity. The events, people and issues covered are representative, and the book is as complete a work, at this level and length, as anything else is likely to be. There are gaps, certain things are glossed over or not explained as fully as a more learned text, certainly, but none of these is inappropriate for the target audience and book's length. Our family borrowed this for several weeks from our local library and will probably purchase a copy for home - it is that good. I highly recommend this illustrated history. ENJOY!

I use this as the text for my eighth grade medieval history/literature class. Hanawalt presents a clear and engaging account of the medieval period, organized chronologically. She manages to insert many interesting details into this well-researched, intelligent and thoroughly unstuffy book. There's no other book I'd care to use with this age group.

Barbara Hanawalt's work here on the Middle Ages by Oxford Press is really a nice introductory text for someone middle school or up. The book is printed in exceptionally high quality, semi-gloss stock with a number of photos to support the text (mostly in black and white, unfortunately), and is not too large in size to be intimidating to an early reader in the subject. (The cover of the book itself is gorgeously done in full color, making the book more appealing to view and pick up.) The book deftly covers cultures that made up the middle ages, the shift from Rome to a European-centric world, The Byzantine, Carolingian, and Arabic empires, the flowering of medieval Europe, new architecture, ideas, and monastic orders, communities and their members, and the four horsemen of the apocalypse (the plague). This is a wonderful introduction to the subject for young adults and adults alike. It is well written, contains a chronology at the end of the book, plus a series of references for further reading. The book is an easy five star for the writing, coverage, and format.

I've been an avid reader of history and biography since I was a child. I like to think I have a better than average understanding of who did what where and when, and why. This illustrated history of the middle ages brought so much of what I had previously read together into a cohesive look at 2000 years of history. In fact, I'll probably read it again just because there was so much information to digest. And while some might criticize the brevity and compact style of the book, I found it refreshing to skip over the "he said, she said" of other history readings, and get straight to the point.

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