

Aim: What were the cultural characteristics of feudalism: Gallery Walk

- Church
- Women
- Peasants
- Weapons and Technology
- Gothic Architecture
- Chivalry



Women's Role in Feudal Society

- “She gets up at 7a.m., and her chaplain is waiting to say morning prayers... and when she is washed and dressed, she has breakfast, then she goes to chapel for evening service, then has dinner... after dinner, she discusses business... then has a short sleep, then drinks ale or wine, then she goes to the chapel for evening service, and has supper, she relaxes with her women attendants... After that she goes to her private room, and says nighttime prayers. By 8 p.m. she is in bed.”
- Daily life of a Noblewoman

Women's Role in Feudal Society

- “I get up early milk our cows and turn them into the field... Then I make butter... Afterward I make cheese... Then the children need looking after... I give the chickens food... and look after the young geese... I bake, I brew, I twist rope, I tease out wool, and card it, and spin it on a wheel. I organize food for the cattle, and for ourselves... I look after all the household.”
- Daily life of a Peasant Woman
 - 1) What seems to be the major concerns in the noblewoman's life? How do they compare with those of the peasant woman?
 - 2) What qualities would you associate with the peasant woman and the life she lived?





3) How are the two classes of women depicted in these pictures? What challenges might there have been for Noblewomen? Would her role change if her husband was not home?

The Crossbow — Medieval Doomsday Device

- IN THE 12th CENTURY, the crossbow was considered by many to be a weapon of mass destruction. Not only was it remarkably accurate and deadly at vast distances, but shockingly, the bolts it fired could penetrate a knight's armor. Crossbows meant that no breast-plated nobleman, prince or king was safe on the battlefield. Any low-born peasant with just a bit of training could kill a lord or sovereign with simple squeeze of a trigger — a platoon of crossbowmen could wipe out a kingdom's aristocracy with just a few volleys.
- And that was something Medieval elites feared might shatter the natural order of society.
- Not surprisingly, the highest European authority of the day, the Roman Catholic Church, called for an outright ban on the weapon. And the Vatican wasn't messing around — violating its decree could lead to excommunication, or worse: damnation of the soul. Strong language, to be sure. In fact, for much of the Middle Ages, the crossbow was considered to be one of the most destabilizing weapons in existence, not unlike today's nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.

Medieval Weapons



Ballista Siege Weapon

The Ballista was an important medieval siege weapon that was used to throw large stones and other missiles from distance. This was among those medieval siege weapons that were used in attack and siege of medieval castles. A quite sophisticated mechanism was used to operate the medieval ballista and it could be built in various sizes depending on the need.



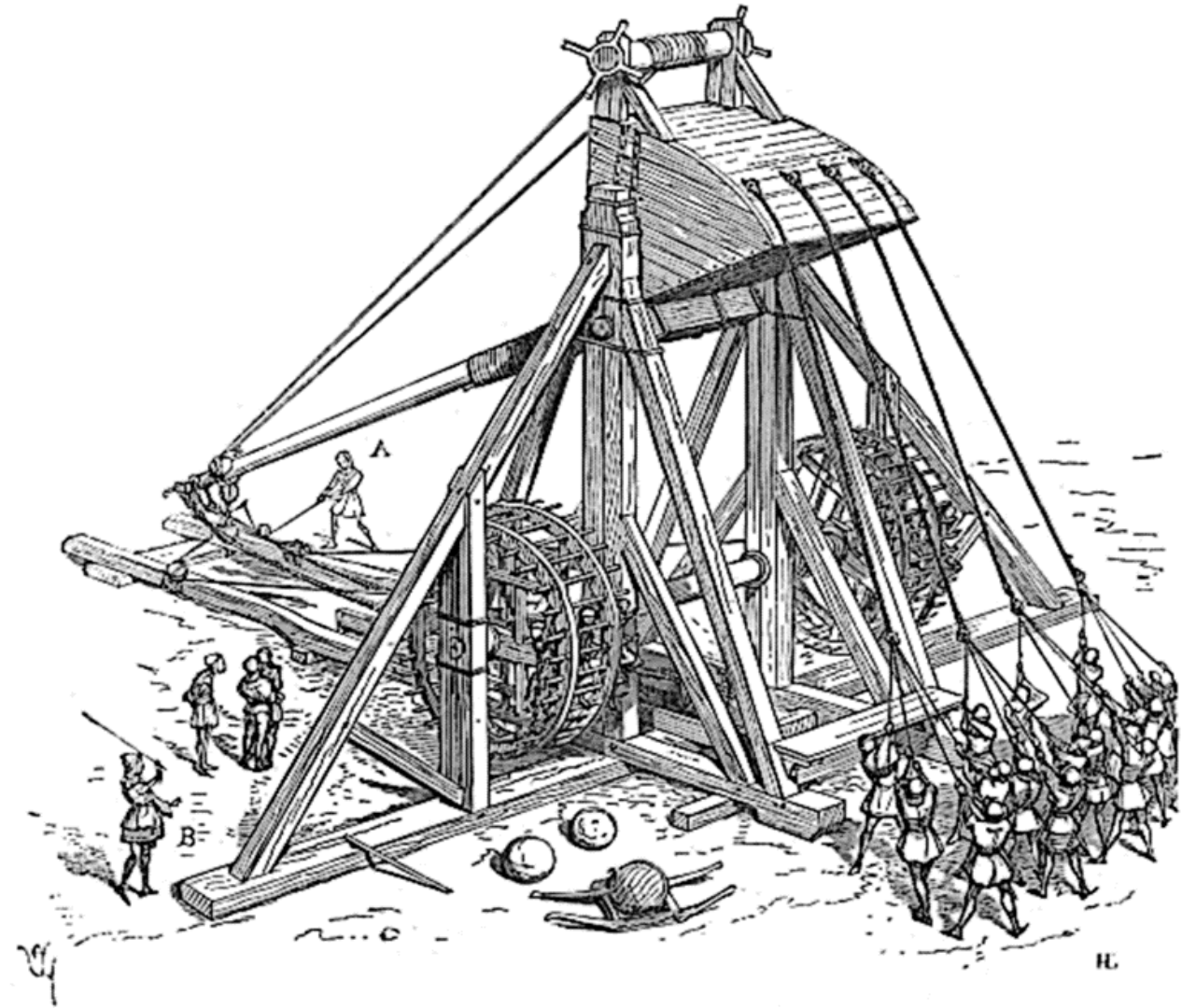
A Battering ram was one of the most popular and commonly used medieval siege weapons and was used to break open the walls or gates of fortifications. It could be built in various sizes, forms, and structures and was relatively easier to build compared to more sophisticated siege weapons. It was also among the highly traditional medieval siege weapons whose use declined after the introduction of cannons and use of gunpowder.

Battering Ram



Trebuchet Siege Weapon

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During medieval times Castle sieges were usually started in the spring or summer this made tactical sense for the attacking armies. The reasons being that the hot summer weather conditions made it easier to create fires, and the water in Castle moats usually froze in winter making it more difficult for a successful medieval siege during the autumn and winter months. There were numerous reasons why it was better to launch a siege on a Castle in the summer rather than the winter. The Trebuchet was an excellent weapon for attacking a castle, not only did it have the power to bring down castle walls but projectiles such as rocks and diseased bodies could be loaded and thrown into the inside areas of the medieval Castle.

Siege Towers

Siege towers were a special kind of medieval siege weapon whose main purpose was the transportation of attacking soldiers on to castle walls. For this purpose, the height of the siege tower was made roughly equal to the height of the castle wall. Unlike other sophisticated medieval siege weapons, the siege towers were mostly constructed on the site of the siege.

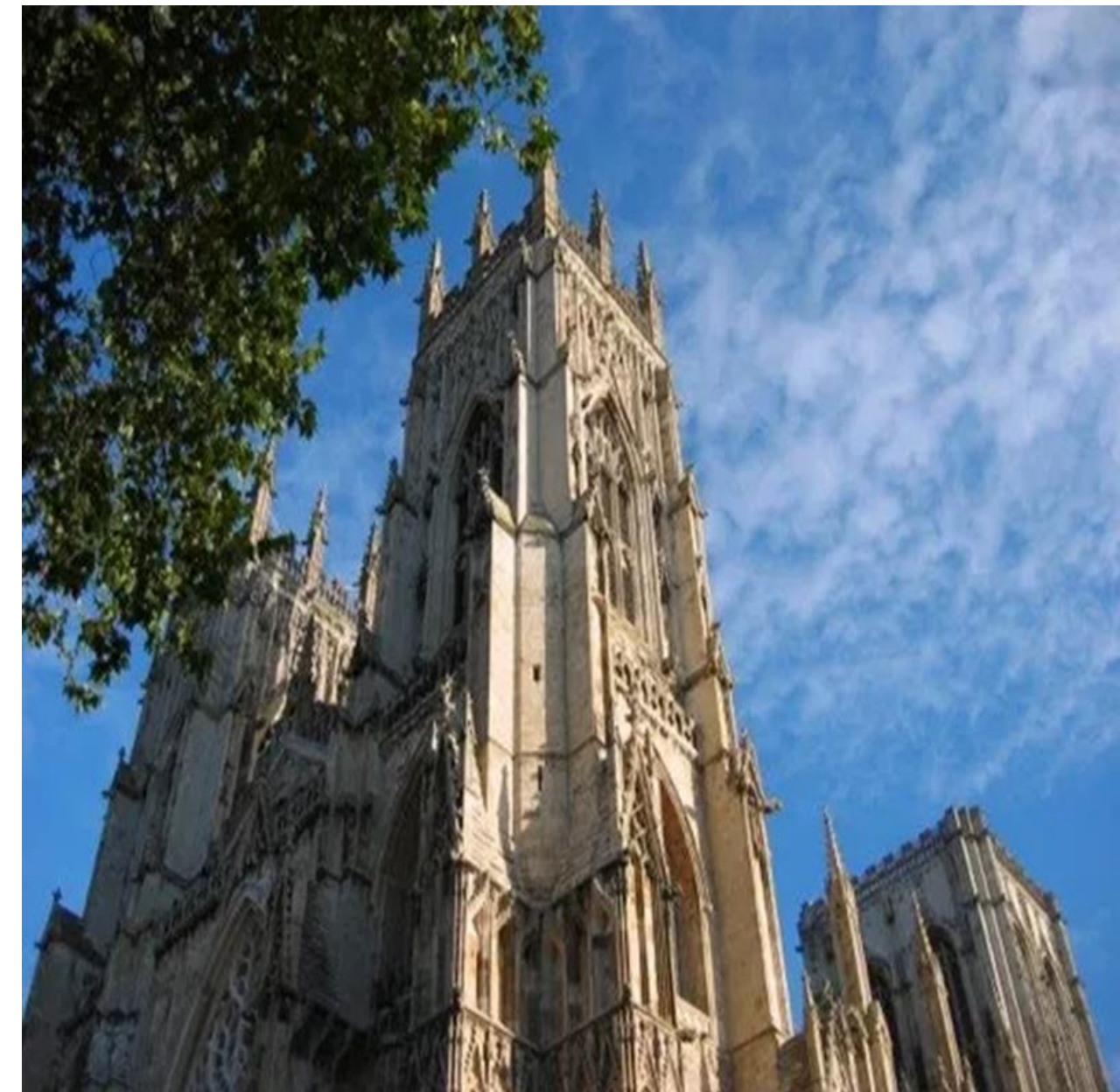


Church Reform and Gothic Architecture

- During the medieval period, most people worshipped in small churches near their homes. Larger churches called cathedrals were built in city areas. The cathedral was viewed as the representation of the City of God. As such it was decorated with all the richness that Christians could offer.



Characteristic 1: Grand, Tall Designs, Which Swept Upwards With Height and Grace



One of the fundamental characteristics of gothic architecture was its height. New building techniques (such as the flying buttress, detailed below) enabled architects to spread the weight of taller walls and loftier towers.

This all meant that gothic buildings could, quite literally, scale new heights. It allowed them to reach up to the heavens – perfect for cathedrals and churches.

Characteristic 2. The Flying Buttress

The flying buttress is the defining external characteristic of gothic architecture.

These buttresses act to spread the weight of the tall walls. They support the structure by transferring force directly to the ground. The flying buttress was not just practical, though. It was also decorative. Flying buttresses were often elaborately designed. They appeared to dart and sweep around each building, giving a sense of movement and of flight. They were often decorated with intricate carvings, giving a sense of grandeur and importance.



Characteristic 3. The Pointed Arch

The innovation of the pointed arch was another key characteristic of gothic architecture. Again, its significance was both practical and decorative. The pointed arch is a sturdy little design. Its form distributed the force of heavier ceilings and bulky wall. It could support much more weight than previous, simple, spindly pillars. The stronger arches allowed for much more vertical height, too – they literally reached up to the heavens. The gothic arch wasn't just a workhorse. It had an aesthetic value and beauty which influenced many other features of gothic design – most notably the vaulted ceiling.



Characteristic 4. The Vaulted Ceiling

Irregular, vaulted ceilings utilized the technology of the pointed arch to spread force and weight from upper floors. These sturdy supports allowed ceilings to be taller than before. (Although note that the ceiling height isn't uniform). This provided the impression of height, grandeur and elegance.



Characteristic 5. Light, Airy Interiors, stained glass

Old buildings tended to be dark and dingy. They generally didn't see any sunlight. If they did have any windows, these were generally tiny. The force of the walls would collapse into themselves if they included large glassworks. Gothic architecture strove to be the exact antithesis to this older Medieval style of building. Using the new building techniques, it emphasized light, bright windows and airy interiors, transforming castles and churches into more pleasant and majestic environments.



Characteristic 6: Tall Spires

Symbolically, spires have two functions. Traditionally, one has been to proclaim a martial power of religion. A spire, with its reminiscence of the spear point, gives the impression of strength. The second is to reach up toward the skies. The celestial and hopeful gesture of the spire is one reason for its association with religious buildings. A spire on a church or cathedral is not just a symbol of piety, but is often seen as a symbol of wealth and prestige.



Critical thinking

- 1) How did the architecture of Gothic cathedrals inspire reverence for God?
- 2) What does the construction of Gothic cathedrals tell us about the people's religious beliefs?
- 3) What elements affect the sense of height in Gothic architecture?
- 4) Have you ever been inside a cathedral? Or have you just walked around one? What characteristic stands out the most to you and why?