



Contextualize

Connect Cause and
Effect

Contextualize Medieval Europe, Feudalism, and Manorialism

➡ Directions: Read the text and examine the images below, then answer the accompanying questions.

The Fall of Rome

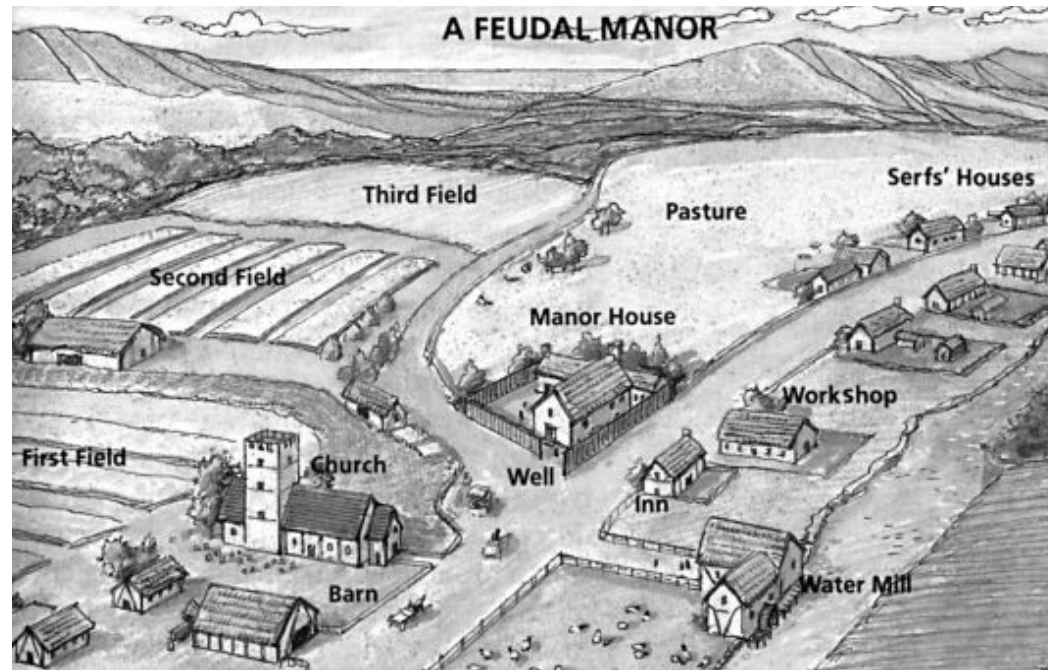
When the Western Roman empire fell in 476 CE, kings and emperors were too weak to maintain order. There was a **power vacuum**. A power vacuum is a condition that exists when someone has lost control and no one has replaced them. With the power vacuum in the western Roman empire, Europeans began fighting for **domination**. In addition to the fighting between Europeans, there were constant **invasions** by the Vikings, Muslims, and other groups. This was a time period of danger, violence, and instability.

Feudalism Brings Protection

To create a safer environment, a system of **feudalism** developed. Feudalism was a **decentralized**, or loosely organized system of rule based on land ownership. In Feudalism, kings divided up their land into **fiefs** and gave them to **lords**. Fiefs could range from a few acres to a hundred square miles. These **lords** gave fiefs to **vassals**. In exchange for the fief, the vassals pledged allegiance to their lord. This allegiance meant that they would raise armies to protect their own lands and fight for their lords. This exchange of pledges is called a **feudal contract**. This was an **interdependent** relationship with **mutual feudal obligations**.

Feudalism Brings Stability

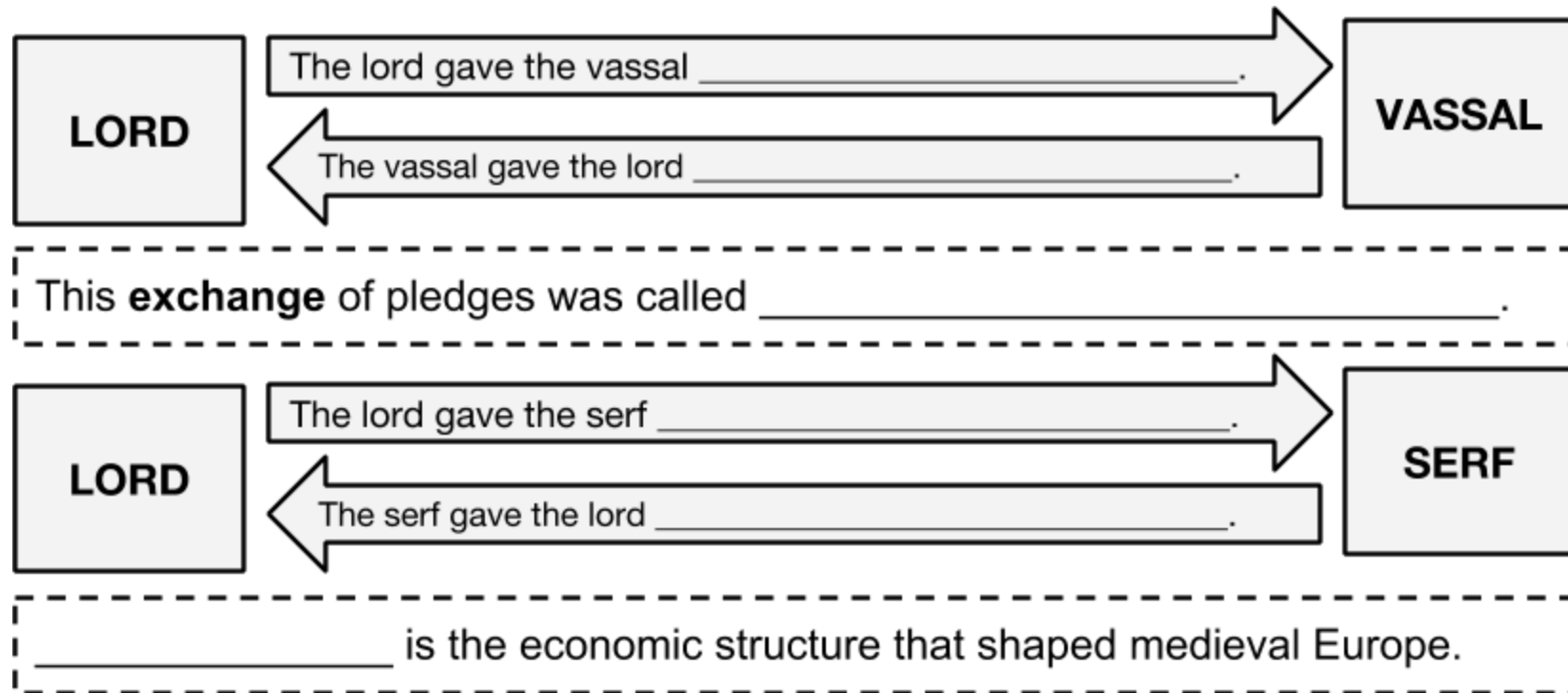
Feudalism created stability through the **manor system** which established a clear social and economic structure called **manorialism**. Manorialism was an economic system structured around the **feudal manor**, or the lord's estate. This estate included the lord's landholding, farming lands, and peasant villages. Most peasants were **serfs**, or people bound to the land. Serfs were not allowed to leave the manor without permission. Serfs made repairs and farmed the land. In exchange for farming and repairs, serfs were protected by their lord in the event of a war or raid. The manor was **self-sufficient** which meant that the peasants produced most of



Source: Michael B. Petrovich et al., *People in Time and Place: World Cultures*, Silver, Burdett & Ginn, 1991 from the NYS Global History and Geography Regents Exam, January 2006.

everything they needed including food, clothing, tools and furniture.
They did not need to trade with others for their basic needs.

1. Using the text above, complete the graphic organizer.



2. Using the diagrams and text above, respond to the following question: *Why did feudalism develop in Western Europe in the 500s after the decline of the Roman Empire?* Use at least one of the following conjunctions in your response: **but, because, so, therefore.**

The Effects of Feudalism

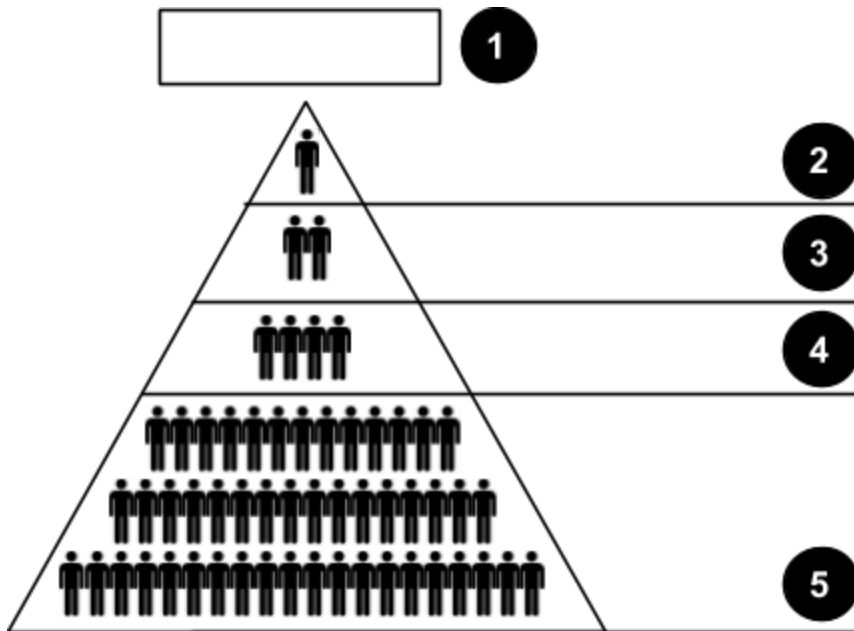
Everyone had a well-defined place in medieval society. People were born into their social positions, and there was little chance of moving beyond them.

Therefore, this was a society built around _____ (social mobility OR a rigid social structure).

➡ Directions: Using the text to your right, place the following social classes in the correct ranking on the social pyramid.

Social Classes:

- Serfs and Peasants
- Kings (Monarchs)
- Roman Catholic Church/Pope
- Knights and Vassals
- Lords



Serfs and Peasants: Most peasants on a manor were serfs, bound to the land. Serfs were not slaves who could be bought and sold. Still, they were not free. They could not leave the manor without the lord's permission. If the manor was granted to a new lord, the serfs went along with it.

Kings (Monarchs):

The king owned all the land and allowed the trusted nobles to govern a part of the land in return for other services.

Roman Catholic Church/Pope: In the centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire, the Roman Catholic Church carved out a unique position in Western Europe. It not only controlled the spiritual life of Christians but gradually became the most powerful **secular**, or non-religious, force in medieval Europe.

During the Middle Ages, the pope was the spiritual leader of the Western Christian Church, based in Rome. Declaring themselves representatives of God on Earth, medieval popes eventually claimed **papal supremacy**, or authority over all secular rulers, including kings and emperors.

The Church developed their own body of laws, known as **canon law**, as well as its own courts. [...] Anyone who disobeyed Church law faced a range of penalties. The most severe and terrifying was **excommunication**. Those who were excommunicated could not receive the sacraments or a Christian burial, which condemned them to hell for eternity.

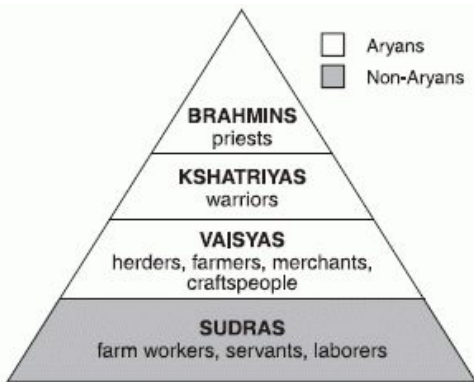
Knights and Vassals:

For medieval nobles, warfare was a way of life. Rival lords battled constantly for power. Many nobles began training in boyhood for a future occupation as a **knight**, or mounted warrior. In the later Middle Ages, knights adopted a code of conduct called **chivalry**.

Nobility (Lords): Below the monarchs were powerful lords such as dukes and counts who held the largest fiefs. Each of these lords had vassals.

Thinking Critically about Social Hierarchy

➡ Directions: Based on what you learned in this lesson and previous units, respond to the questions below.

Questions	Responses
<p>1a. Which social class had the greatest amount of power in feudal Europe?</p> <p>1b. What specific powers did this class have?</p>	<p>1a.</p> <p>1b.</p>
<p>2a. Which class of people made up the bulk of the medieval population?</p> <p>2b. If you were a serf, what would be your opinion of the feudal system? Why?</p>	<p>2a.</p> <p>2b.</p>
<div><div><p>Source: <i>Guide to the Essentials of World History</i>, Prentice Hall, 1999 (adapted)</p></div><div><p>3a. What are the similarities between the feudal social structure and the Hindu caste system?</p><p>3b. What are the differences between the feudal social structure and the Hindu caste system?</p></div></div> <td><p>3a.</p><p>3b.</p></td>	<p>3a.</p> <p>3b.</p>

FA

SQ 4. What were feudalism and manorialism? Why did they develop in Western Europe? What effects did they have on people living in Medieval Europe?



➡ **Directions:** Using evidence from the documents above, respond to the task below in the space provided.

**Connect
Cause and
Effect**

1. Define what feudalism was.

2. Define what manorialism was.

3. Write two sentences to describe the advantages and disadvantages of feudalism and the manorialism using one of the clauses below:

Even though	While	Despite that	However
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