

HA Resource Hub Submission Form

Resource Title: What are your ideas about the Middle Ages? **Age Range:** KS3

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Resource Details:

8 pages of text (this PDF)

1 set of PowerPoint slides

1 set of teachers' notes (last 3 pages of this PDF)

Necessary prior learning to complete this:

Nil – this is a starter resource on the Middle Ages. It can be used at the beginning of any scheme of work on the Middle Ages – ideally it should have no prior teaching as it's designed to find out what students know already.

What does it lead to next?

Chapter 2 – Were medieval people very different from us

OR

A school's own scheme of work

Explanation: How should this resource be used?

Pages 1-2 – ask students to read and answer the questions to identify their chronological knowledge.

Page 3 provides the answers to pages 1-2. These can be discussed with or read by students.

Pages 4-5 – a questionnaire for students to fill in individually to identify their existing ideas about the Middle Ages

Pages 6-7 – for students to read or for discussion with students – and questions to answer.

Page 8 – questions to pull together and sum up their initial answer to an overall question about the Middle Ages. This can then be modified as work continues on other topics.

Further guidance on use is in the teachers' notes and the PowerPoint provides duplicates of some material from the pages.

What are your ideas about the Middle Ages?

When were the Middle Ages?

Imagine trying to commentate on a football match without using these words:

Goal Pass Corner Penalty Foul Second half First half

The commentary would be confusing. Nobody would know what was happening.

History is the same.

It's very confusing if we talk about it without using the right words. Words like Tudors, Romans and Middle Ages are the History equivalents of goal, first half and foul. These names for the periods of history help us understand which part of history other people are talking about. They also help us build up a map of the past in our heads so we don't get confused about the sequence of periods.

The Chronology Game below helps you identify which period names you know and which you're not sure about so you can put mistakes right and feel more confident. This is far better than muddling on, pretending there isn't a problem but keeping making the same mistakes. Saying 'I don't understand' is the first step towards understanding something properly and building up your confidence. Confidence is very important for learning effectively.

The Chronology Game - Instructions

1. Play in pairs. Your teacher will give you a time limit for the game.
2. Your aim is to score as many points as you can. There are plenty of questions about the Middle Ages because that's the period you are about to study.

Good luck – and remember, some of these periods overlap.

Mark these historical periods in the correct places on your timeline

1 point each

The Tudors Roman Britain The Victorians

2 points each

The Stuarts The Industrial Revolution

3 points each

The Early Middle Ages (the Saxons and Vikings)
The Later Middle Ages

Bonus points

(one point for each correct answer)

- Name 3 people who lived in the Later Middle Ages
- Name 3 events or inventions in the Later Middle Ages
- The Latin words for Middle Ages are 'medium aevum'. Which English word for Middle Ages was made up from medium aevum?



From: Ian Dawson et al, Making Sense of History, Hodder Education



Why do dates in the 18th century begin with 17..?

This puzzles students every year.

The dates on the timeline will help you understand this.

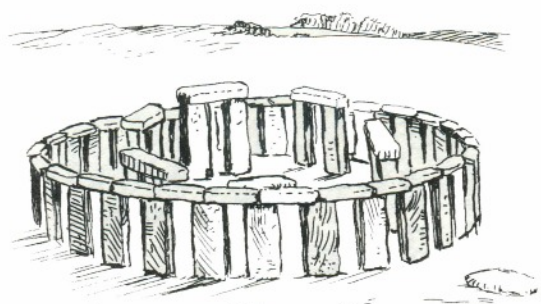
And this little table should help as well.

1st Century – years 1 to 99
2nd Century – years 100 to 199
3rd Century – years 200 to 299

Does the timeline show all of British History?

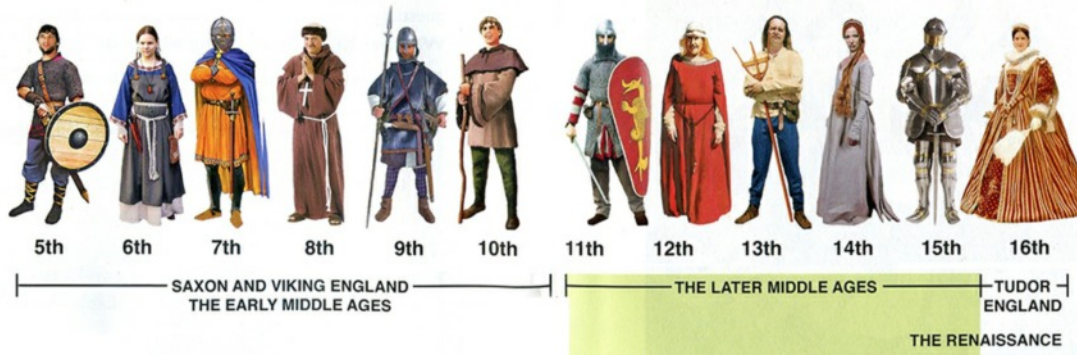
No! This timeline only shows the most recent part of the history of Britain. If we drew a timeline going back to when the first people lived in Britain it would be far, far longer. The first people lived in Britain 500,000 years ago so this timeline (using a scale of one person per century) would need another 5,000 people adding at the beginning to show the whole history of people in Britain.

The most famous ancient building in Britain is Stonehenge, built about 2300BC. How many people would you need to add to the left-hand side of the timeline to go back to Stonehenge?



When were the Middle Ages?

The Middle Ages is the period shown on this timeline. First came the Early Middle Ages (also known as the Saxon and Viking period) and then came (surprise!) the Later Middle Ages. The Norman Conquest (which began in 1066) is usually seen as the dividing line between 'Early' and 'Later' Middle Ages.



Middle Ages: Medieval

The Middle Ages is also called the medieval period.

The word 'medieval' comes from two Latin words 'medium aevum' which mean Middle Ages.

The Middle Ages is a name that is only used for a period in European history.

Other parts of the world use other names for the periods in their histories.

There were overlaps between periods of history. The Renaissance, covering the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, overlapped both the Middle Ages and Tudor England, as you can see. Another important thing to remember is that the Middle Ages did not end abruptly on one day or one year. It overlapped with Tudor England. Henry Tudor became King Henry VII in 1485 but many aspects of life continued just as they had been during the Middle Ages throughout the 1500s and 1600s. History is full of gradual developments rather than sudden dramatic changes.

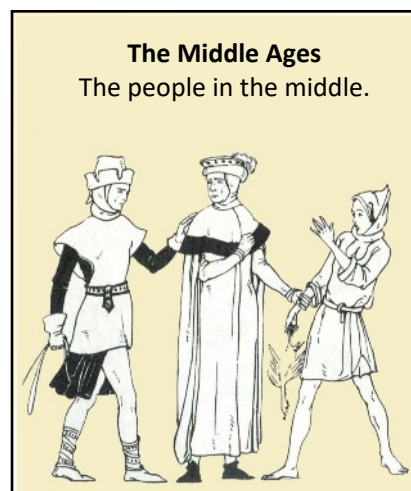
The Middle Ages – in the middle of what?

The Middle Ages came 'in the middle' between two groups of people. The first group were the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The second group were the people of the Renaissance.

The people of the Renaissance period admired the Greeks and the Romans but looked down on the people of the Middle Ages because they thought that people in the Middle Ages were less intelligent and inventive than themselves.



Greeks and Romans



The Middle Ages
The people in the middle.

We admire the Greeks and Romans for their scientific discoveries, books and wonderful buildings. They were intelligent like us.

We look down on the people in the middle ages between us. They were not as intelligent as the Greeks and Romans or people today.



The Renaissance

What are your ideas about the Middle Ages?

Before you begin exploring any topic in history it's important to identify the ideas you already have about it. This is important because the ideas already in your mind affect how you think about a new topic, such as the Middle Ages and its people. The questions below help you and your teacher identify your current ideas. Later you can compare what you think at the beginning and end of your work and see whether your ideas have changed and how much you have learned.

1. Which THREE words do you think best describe ordinary people and their lives in the Middle Ages?

Clever	Dirty	Enjoyable	Violent	Practical
Loving	Nasty	Ambitious	Dangerous	Hard-working
Inventive	Superstitious	Comfortable	Miserable	Stupid

2. What kind of work did over 80% of people do in the Middle Ages?

Soldiering	Farming	Being Monks and Priests	Making and selling clothes and shoes
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3. How important was religion to people in the Middle Ages?

Very Important	Important	Quite Important	Not important at all
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4. Did people care about dirt in streets in the Middle Ages?

Yes	No
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5. How much violence was there in the Middle Ages compared with today?

A great deal more	A little more	About the same	Less than today
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6. Which THREE words do you think best describe kings, noblemen and their families in the Middle Ages?

Intelligent	Violent	Superstitious	Loyal	Loving
Brave	Inventive	Hard-working	Power-mad	
Ruthless	Treacherous	Ambitious	Honourable	Thoughtful

7. Did people try to stay healthy in the Middle Ages?

Yes No

8. Were barons keen to rebel against the king to increase their own power and wealth?

As often as possible Quite often Very occasionally No

9. Was the king expected to consult his barons and knights before taking important decisions?

Yes No

10. How interested were working people in national political events?

Very interested Interested Not at all interested

11. Were people in the Middle Ages as intelligent as people today?

Yes No

What do other students think about the Middle Ages?

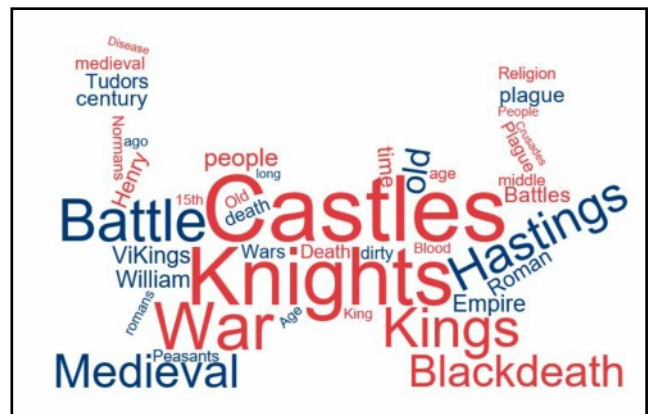
You are not the only students to fill in a questionnaire about the Middle Ages. In 2018, Dr Jason Todd, a researcher at Oxford University, asked 600 students to answer questions which were similar to the ones you have answered. This research gives us plenty of evidence about what school students think about the Middle Ages.

Look at the evidence shown below:

1. What do the largest words in the word cloud have in common?
2. Sum up in one or two sentences what the evidence tells you about students' ideas about the Middle Ages.
3. a) Where do your ideas about the Middle Ages come from? (for example, TV programmes, films, books, computer games, museums, historical sites, school).
b) Explain one example of what you have learned about the Middle Ages outside school.
4. Can you think of any reasons to be positive about life in the Middle Ages?

Evidence A

This word cloud shows the words that school students most associated with the Middle Ages.



From: Dr. Jason Todd

Evidence B

The research into the ideas of over 600 school students showed that:

- 90% thought that medieval people were less intelligent than people today
- 92% said that medieval people did not care about dirt
- 95% said that religion was important or very important to people in the Middle Ages
- 73% said that people were not good at solving problems in the Middle Ages

Evidence C

The same research showed that the school students thought these words best describe ordinary people in the Middle Ages:

Religious hard-working dirty superstitious miserable

And that these words best describe kings and noblemen in the Middle Ages:

power-mad religious ruthless

Your Overall Enquiry

Nearly everybody has a negative picture of life in the Middle Ages. A London museum asked visitors what they thought about the Middle Ages. One typical answer was “there are soldiers, peasants, high castles, muddy lowlands ...Black Death and Plague are all around. It’s raining. People are drunk, fighting among themselves”.

But are people right? Your overall enquiry question is:

Are people right to be so negative about the Middle Ages?

1. Fill in a grid like this one with your ideas and your questions about medieval life.

Evidence and thoughts that suggest people are right to be negative about the Middle Ages	Evidence and thoughts that suggest people are NOT right to be negative about the Middle Ages	Things you would like to find out or ask about life in the Middle Ages

2. Now put a cross on the line below to show your first answer to the enquiry question.

Are people right to be so negative about the Middle Ages?

|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

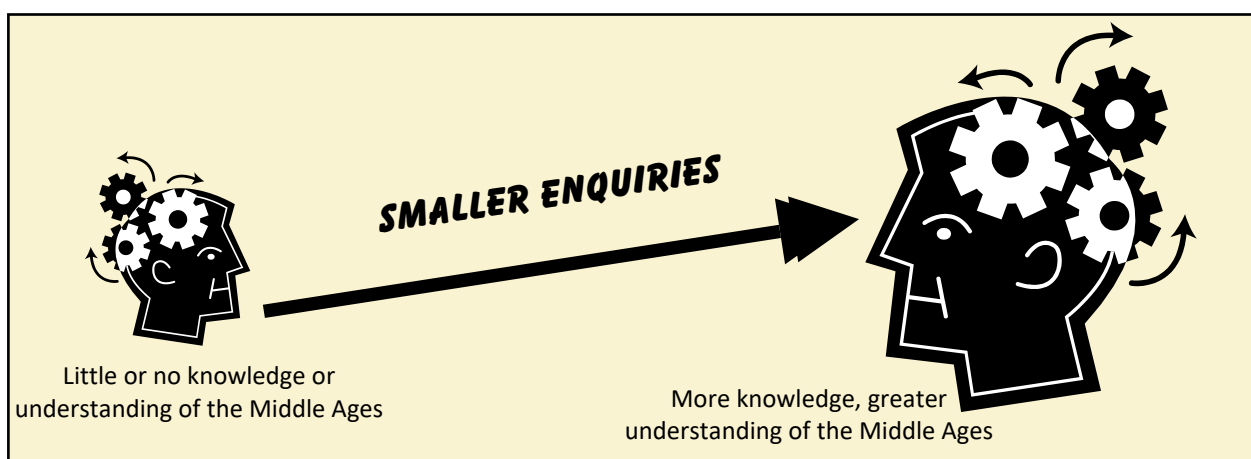
Yes, they are right I mostly agree I’m not sure I mostly disagree No, they are wrong

3. Use your answers to questions 1 and 2 to write a short answer to the enquiry question.

Building up a more detailed answer

You probably do not know a lot about the Middle Ages. Therefore you may not be certain about your answer. However this is just your first idea about an answer. Historians call this first answer a hypothesis. As you learn more you can change and improve it.

Hypothesis: the first suggested answer to a question.



You will know a lot more by the end of your work on the Middle Ages. After each small enquiry you can return briefly to this overall question and think:

What evidence can I add to support my answer or do I want to change it?

Changing your answer doesn’t mean you made a mistake – it means you understand the topic better because you have learned new things.

Your Overall Enquiry Is ...

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Notes for Teachers

I've tried to keep these notes straightforward, identifying the purposes of the material and practical issues you need to be warned about. I haven't described every feature of each page! The associated PowerPoints provide duplicates of some of the material.

1. What are your ideas about the Middle Ages?

I'd have liked to start with a really involving and enthusing story but this introduction isn't about any one aspect of medieval history but about what ideas the students already have about the period. So I hardened my heart started with the more prosaic but deeply important business of finding out what students know. This is followed by setting up overall enquiry 'Are people right to be so negative about the Middle Ages?' which links to each section of 'Medieval Lives Mattered'. This enquiry could also be used to link together your own classroom materials.

pp. 1-3 When were the Middle Ages? – these pages enable you and the students themselves to identify how effectively they can use the names of periods and also place the Middle Ages within the pattern of European history. The 'Chronology Game' on pages 1-2 will highlight students' strengths and weaknesses in the use of these period names. You can also find out via two of the 'bonus' questions who or what they connect with the Middle Ages, if anybody or anything. Jason Todd's research shows that Henry VIII gets lots of mentions as a medieval figure so don't be surprised if Henry appears in answers – this is partly because he 'looks medieval', partly because students may not have covered any medieval history, partly because they haven't spent enough time working explicitly on 'periods' – and I'm sure there are other reasons too.

Page 3 provides a summary including an explanation of the term 'Middle Ages'. One issue I haven't covered in detail (though it's mentioned in the margin) is that the terms used in the timeline only apply to European history and that the histories of other cultures have their own periodisation. This is important so I plan to come back to it in a later section of these resources where I can explain this more fully and clearly. However you may wish to develop this point here.

pp.4-5 What are your ideas about the Middle Ages? – the questionnaire on these pages will identify students' preconceptions about the period so that you and they have clear base to start from. The students in the research recently undertaken by Jason Todd had a decidedly negative image of the Middle Ages and its people, as does the public at large according to other research. Such ideas need to be identified and then challenged explicitly if students are to develop a more rounded

picture of the period. (This also sets a good model for approaching any period of history.)

Establishing their initial ideas will also enable students to see later how their perceptions have altered and therefore how much they have learned which is, in turn, important for developing confidence that they can learn effectively.

p.6 What do other students think about the Middle Ages? – this information summarises some of the results of Jason’s research, both for comparison with your students’ own ideas and to feed into the final page where the overall enquiry is set up.

pp.7-8 Your overall enquiry – this is where this section has been heading! Page 7 sets up the enquiry while page 8 repeats the tasks but offers space where students can record their initial ideas.

One major danger with KS3 is that students don’t link the topics they study together in any way. One way to create links is with an enquiry question which explores interpretations of a period as a whole, hence this overall question ‘Are people right to be so negative about the Middle Ages?’ I’ve already written a good deal about this here - so won’t repeat it all.

<http://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Medieval/MAArticles.html>

As this is an overall enquiry encompassing all students’ work on the Middle Ages it’s intended to be light-touch, set up clearly, building on students’ own ideas and the material on page 6.

Importantly the question can be related to whatever medieval topics you’re covering (and not just those I will be writing about) but it may encourage some teachers to pick out aspects of topics which show the people of the time in a more positive light.

The real advantage of this approach will be apparent at the end when students should be able to compare their thoughts on the Middle Ages at that stage with those they had when they began. This should give them a strong sense of how much they have learned, not in quantity of details but in their broader understanding of the period. If they feel highly superior to all those other people who don’t understand the Middle Ages that will be great!

Making learning visible

During this and other sections I’ve included brief references to ways in which students can come to understand their learning e.g. identifying what they aren’t sure about so they can put it right, identifying their preconceptions about a topic and, particularly on p.7, discussing how this enquiry

will be structured. It has always seemed to me essential to be as explicit as possible about how learn effectively, both for important educational reasons and because this does lead onto better exam results. For more on this see Dale Banham's important work on Raising Attainment:

<http://thinkinghistory.co.uk/Issues/attainment/index.htm>

A note on the use of the word 'hypothesis' – this may seem ambitious! 'Hypothesis' is not always easy to say, it may be hard to spell and many of us did not meet it in our own experiences as history students. However it is the best word to use when explaining that students' first idea is a suggestion and not a definitive answer. Some people prefer the word 'argument' but that comes loaded with baggage – students often think of people shouting each other down – and so readjusting students' understanding of 'argument' can be difficult. 'Hypothesis' comes with no such baggage and many students take pride in learning and using 'difficult' words. Dale's own Y7 classes use it regularly and correctly – it can be done.