

SHORT ANSWER

10 minutes for these questions (4 points each)

- 1-2. Give two reasons why towns and trade almost ceased to function during the Middle Ages.

Any two of the these would be correct:

- *With the demise of the Roman empire, policing forces virtually disappeared and marauding barbarians made travel outside towns unsafe.*
- *Merchants ceased to trade on roads between the town, resulting in run down roads and increased robbery.*
- *As feudalism and manorialism took hold, life became localized. The necessities of life were produced by serfs and other workers within the sight of a lord's castle walls.*
- *European economy was land-based, not money-based, so barter and obligation replaced money and free trade.*

3. As the feudal system provided food and stability for a large percentage of Europe, and as Crusaders (or the Crusades) reawakened interest in Palestine and the Near East, trade and commerce were revived in Europe.

4. What powerful new social class emerged as towns were built?

A new merchant class

5. What were guilds?

Guilds were one of the most important institutions in the Middle Ages, each consisting of an association of craftsmen in a particular trade who worked together to secure their business interests.

6. Briefly describe the three stages through which a craftsman could progress in his trade.

Most members of the guild were men who first had to work for seven years as an apprentice to a master craftsman. To prove that he could do high quality work, he was tested. If his work was acceptable, he could join the guild as a journeyman. Though few succeeded, a journeyman could pursue becoming a master at his craft, at which point he could take on apprentices of his own.

7. What is usury, and why was it illegal during the Middle Ages?

Usury comes from the Latin word usura, meaning "interest." It is the practice of charging interest on loans. With Christianity widely adopted by Europeans during the Middle Ages and the resultant merging of canonical and social laws, usury became illegal.

8. Europe moved slowly but surely from a land-based economy to a money-based economy.

- 9-10. Name two privileges granted to members of developing towns, which directly impacted the weakening of the feudal system.

Any two of the following would be correct:

- *Since the tradesmen of the town were considered free men whose customers lived primarily outside the castle walls, they were able to leave the confines of the castle walls to work beyond them, affording them slow but growing independence.*
- *As prosperity returned to Europe, townsmen increased their rights and self-government by forming guilds, resulting in towns growing more wealthy and less dependent on their feudal lords.*
- *As kings sought to increase their power at the expense of local lords, they gained the allegiance of towns by granting royal charters for independence.*

ESSAY QUESTION

20 minutes for one of these questions (60 points)

1. Detail the ways that the growth and expansion of towns and trade affected manorial and feudal practices, government structure, and the ordering of society in the High Middle Ages.

Points an Excellent Answer Might Include

Effects on Manorial/Feudal Practices

- Manorial Practices:
 - Kings and nobles declared peasants free if they lived for a day and a year in a town.
 - Peasants abandoned their manorial responsibilities for the freedom and pursuit of specialized trades the towns offered.
 - Through the exercise of free trade, society shifted from a land-based economy to a money-based one.
 - The manorial system unraveled.
- Feudal Practices:
 - The peasants' rapid removal from manors for the towns undermined the wealth, power, and prestige of feudal lords.
 - Townspeople needed mobility to trade and required a new way to govern themselves in order to prosper and profit.
 - The development of guilds brought a new form of protection and leadership from the control of feudal lords.

Effects on Government Structure

- Powers of kings increased as the power of local lords decreased.
- Kings began to forge national governments by granting royal charters for independence to towns in order to gain their allegiance.

Effects on the Ordering of Society

- With the growth of towns and the practice of many trades, opportunities arose for many to master a trade through becoming an apprentice or journeyman.
- Townspeople experiencing the air of freedom and self-government did not want to go back to the restrictive way of life under feudalism.
- People pressured and fought for increasing political, social and religious liberties.

Sample Answer

In the High Middle Ages, the growth and expansion of towns and trade profoundly affected manorial and feudal practices, government structure, and the ordering of society. Although the towns did in some ways contribute to the rise of kings and national governments, the overall effect was to promote personal freedoms among the people.

Medieval Europe was an agrarian society with most people living in small villages. Towns began to grow significantly when kings and nobles declared peasants free if they lived for a day and a year in a town. Because people were abandoning their manorial responsibilities for the freedom offered in towns and were also pursuing specialized trades, the manorial system began to unravel. With the decline of the manorial system, feudal lords also lost wealth, power, and prestige. The growth of towns and trade resulted in greater mobility and the rise of guilds as a new form of protection and leadership, both of which further weakened feudal ties.

Developing towns and trade also affected governmental structures. As local lords decreased in power, kings were seeking to gain greater control and forge national governments. Offering towns royal charters of independence, kings sought to gain the direct allegiance of the people. While this strengthened centralized government, it also provided an increase in some personal freedoms that, in places like England, would encourage the development of other forms of self-government.

In society, too, the growth and expansion of towns had important effects. People now had the opportunity to rise from an apprentice to a journeyman and finally to a master craftsman. A new class of merchants grew increasingly powerful and worked to secure rights over trade. In addition, townspeople who experienced aspects of freedom and self-government did not want to go back to the restrictive way of life under feudalism. Instead, people sought increasing political and religious liberties.

The effects of the development of town and trade in the High Middle Ages were far-reaching. It led to the decline of manorialism and feudalism, the rise of kings and chartered cities, and the formation of a powerful merchant class. Most importantly, it gave people a taste of political and social freedoms, which would forever prevent them from returning to the feudal system.

2. “Guilds were a crucial part of a craftsman’s life during the High Middle Ages.” With facts derived from your studies, support this statement by explaining the purposes of a guild, the power its members exercised, and how it would potentially benefit a craftsman who joined it.

Points an Excellent Answer Might Include

Purposes

- To safeguard the rights of members
- To ensure fair business practices among craftsmen by regulating themselves and the quality of their goods
- To gain common privileges and greater profits
- To provide general leadership in towns

Powers Exercised

- Regulated quality and quantity of goods
- Made and enforced laws with punishments and penalties in order to ensure honest and fair business practices; also settled disputes
- Agreed on wages for the craftsmen’s workers
- No one could sell who was not a member. This regulation kept untrained merchants out of the guild’s profession and also ensured a high quality of goods and high prices.
- Led in pursuing independent functioning for the town, at times demanding charters of self-government from lords or kings

Benefits Received

- Craftsmen were released from feudal ties and free to sell goods outside the castle walls.
- Could buy large quantities of goods cheaply
- If a member got ill and couldn’t work, the guild provided help and compensation.
- If he died, the guild helped with funeral ceremonies and offered prayers for the dead.
- The guild built market places for its members to sell their goods.
- The guild system allowed tradesmen a margin of profit by selling higher quality goods for higher prices.

Sample Answer

Guilds were a crucial part of a craftsman’s life during the High Middle Ages. As is evident from the purposes, powers, and benefits of a guild, craftsmen needed guilds in order to work and thrive.

Guilds had several important purposes that were essential for craftsmen. One of their chief functions was to safeguard their members. Members of a guild shared all trading and buying privileges in common, as well as the greater profits that resulted. Guilds also existed as a method of self-regulation, ensuring that all of the craftsmen would produce high quality goods and that they would have fair business practices. As they fulfilled these purposes, guilds often provided leadership and some kind of government for an entire town.

Guilds exercised economic and political power over craftsmen and others. Regulating the quality and quantity of goods, they made trade impossible for people who were not part of the guild. Because no one could sell who was not a member, untrained merchants were kept out of the guild's market, ensuring that the guild's high quality goods would also bring a high price. As guilds grew in power, some even gained the right to make and enforce laws or to settle disputes. With these economic and political powers, guilds were able to call for the independence of some towns, at times obtaining charters of independence from the king.

Craftsmen received numerous benefits from being members of a guild. No longer tied to the land, they could buy and sell freely beyond the castle walls. Because of the size of guilds, they could buy large quantities of material more cheaply and thus increase their profits. Guilds also provided a market for craftsmen to sell their goods. In addition, guilds benefited people on a personal level, providing compensation when a craftsman was sick and could not work, or, in the case of death, even paying for funeral services and praying for the dead.

From their purposes to their powers and benefits, guilds were of enormous importance to medieval craftsmen. Without guilds, craftsmen would have had many difficulties in surviving and would have been very unlikely to thrive.