

The Causes and Course of the Crusades

Name:

Date:

Period:

What were the Crusades?

The Crusades were holy wars fought between Christians in Europe and Muslims in the Middle East between 1095 and 1291. Although the main goal of the Crusades was to take control of Jerusalem away from the Muslims, there were many reasons why European knights and others were willing to travel and fight a war in a foreign land.

Why were Europeans willing to fight the Crusades?

For centuries, Christian pilgrims traveled from Europe to Jerusalem. In the 11th century, however, the Seljuk Turks, who were Muslim, began to interfere with these pilgrimages. In 1071, the Seljuk Turks fought against the Byzantine Empire at the Battle of Manzikert. The Byzantines, who were Christian, lost. The Byzantine emperor asked the Christians in Europe to help protect his empire from the Turks. In 1095, Pope Urban II called for a crusade against the Muslims to regain control of Jerusalem. To all crusaders, he gave this promise:

All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the [Muslims], shall have immediate [forgiveness] of sins.

-Pope Urban II, 1095

Besides the promise of forgiveness of sins, there were other reasons Europeans were willing to fight.

Read the following list of reasons and decide whether the reason is religious, political, or economic. Then, put a letter next to each reason: R for religious, P for political, and E for economic.

Reason	Religious, Political or Economic?
The desire to take control of Jerusalem away from Muslims.	
The belief that fighting in a crusade would give you forgiveness of sins.	
The chance to travel and make money.	
The desire to defend the Byzantine empire from the Turks.	
The opportunity for younger sons of European nobles to get new land in the Middle East.	
The possibility of opening up new trade routes between Europe and the Middle East.	

Take another look at the reasons why Europeans were willing to fight. Which one would have convinced you most to go on a crusade? Why?