**Objective 4: The Decline of Medieval Europe**

1. How Black Death caused social and economic decline.
2. The causes and effects of the Hundred Year’s War.

**Vocabulary:**

1. Black Death: a plague that killed 1/3 of Europe’s population in the 1300s
2. Bubonic Plague: another name for the Black Death
3. Longbow: large, powerful bow that gave the English an early advantage in the 100 Year’s War
4. Martyr: someone who dies for his or her religion
5. Normandy: a region of Northern France that the English and French fought over
6. Standing army: military force ready to move at any time with professional soldiers, not vassals

**“The Plague”**

In the 14th century (the 1300's), a horrible disease struck Asia, Africa, and Europe. The people called this illness the Black Death. The disease started in Asia in the 1340's. It quickly spread to Africa, and throughout Europe.

Infected people first broke out with red ring shaped marks with dark center spots on their arms and necks. They would run high fevers. They became even more ill, and then they died.

In just two years, 25 million people died of the plague. In ten years, the plague had killed over 1/3 of Europe's population.  Can you imagine the fear people must have felt?

People were sick everywhere. Whole families were wiped out. Whole villages were wiped out.

At first, people locked their doors trying to protect themselves. They carried flowers to ward off the smell of the dead and dying. The skies were filled with ashes as people burned houses filled with the dead. Villages filled with the dead were burned down, to contain and kill the disease. Nothing worked.

Outbreaks of the disease seemed to come in cycles. Just as people thought it was over, a new rash of illness would hit the towns, and from the towns move to the villages.

People did not know that infected rats carried the disease. They thought it was a punishment from God for being wicked. They believed if you were bad, you would get the plague and die.

The towns were hit the hardest. There was no sanitation in the towns. People threw their garage out on the street. To a rat, coming off a ship docked at port, the towns must have seemed like heaven.

Medieval knowledge of health, hygiene, and medical practices was very limited. Commoners and nobles alike took infrequent baths. The peasants slept and worked in the same clothes for days and even weeks at a time without washing themselves or their clothes. The nobles were not much better. Soap was made of lye, which was very rough on the skin. There was no toothpaste or toothbrushes. People used watered spices on their lips and teeth, but all that did was briefly hide the smell of rotting teeth. Peasants died young from malnutrition and the simplest of diseases. Women died in childbirth from ignorance. People handled cattle and then directly handled food.

Even before the plague, what is amazing really is that *anyone* lived. The truth is, only the very strong survived. But the strong had no defense against the Black Death. No one was safe. And millions of people died.

Outbreaks of the plague continued for two hundred years. The cause of the plague was not discovered until the 20th century (1900's.) Today, this disease is called the bubonic plague. We have a vaccine for the plague should an outbreak ever happen again. We're lucky. The people in the Middle Ages did not have vaccines to protect themselves from many diseases as we do today.

**“The Hundred Year’s War” by Sharon Fabian**

The Hundred Years' War was a long series of conflicts between England and France. In a way it was the big finale to the fighting that had gone on throughout the whole Middle Ages as one tribe after another tried to invade and rule various parts of Europe.

Before the beginning of the Hundred Years' War, the Vikings had conquered a large part of France and named it Normandy; then the Vikings from Normandy (France) had conquered England. Then, the Anglo-Normans (the Normandy Vikings who now ruled England) had re-conquered Normandy. Then, France had taken Normandy back.

Now, England wanted France back. Isabella, the mother of King Edward III, especially wanted it back, since she had big plans for her son to rule a kingdom that combined England and France. Since the king of France had just died, leaving no successor, Isabella claimed that her son Edward III should be king of France. Of course, France objected, and that was the beginning of the Hundred Years' War.

The war began in 1337, and for about the first 25 years, England was winning. Then, around 1360, the tide turned and France started to drive the English out. For about 40 years, France was winning. Then, in 1400, the English under their new ruler, King Henry V, began winning victories. After about 30 more years, the tide turned once again, and France became an independent country. In 1453, over 100 years after it started, the war ended.

The Hundred Years' War was important in history for a number of reasons. It changed the way that wars were fought, and even the way of life, in Europe. One of the changes began with a suit of armor. A new type of armor made of solid metal plates came into use during the Hundred Years' War. This new plate armor gave knights better protection from traditional weapons. New types of weapons, such as the giant longswords and longbows were developed to meet the challenge. Cannons and gunpowder, developed earlier in Asia, came into military use in Europe during this time too. The result of all of these changes in weaponry was that traditional fighting forces of knights, and their traditional code of chivalry, began to be outdated.

Larger fighting forces were needed to fight this new type of war. So, both England and France developed standing armies, military forces ready to move out at any time. Other European countries followed suit, and soon the kingdoms of Europe began to resemble the countries of modern Europe, with government structures that could support armies and other institutions.

As modern governments grew, the feudal system of medieval Europe declined. Nobles and knights no longer wielded the power that they once did.

The Hundred Years' War brought about lasting changes for England, the country that started the war, too. At the war's end, England was no longer powerful on the continent of Europe. Not inclined to sit back and do nothing, England turned its attentions elsewhere. As an island country, it had long ago developed power on the seas. Now, England once again turned its attention outward, farther across the water than just Europe. In future years, it would become a great colonial power with colonies around the globe.

With all of the changes that had taken place during the Hundred Years' War, the Middle Ages were coming to an end. Europe was moving forward into a new era.

**“Joan of Arc” by Sharon Fabian**

Joan of Arc was a French girl who grew up on her family's farm in the valley of the Meuse River. She learned to spin wool, sew, and help with other chores on the farm. She was a very religious child who loved to listen to the daily ringing of the church bells.

While Joan was growing up, a terrible war was raging across France. France and England had been fighting for control of the country, off and on, for nearly one hundred years! At this time, England was winning. It already controlled much of northern France and the city of Paris. Charles, who should have been the king of France, had never been crowned and only ruled a small area in the south of France. He was running out of both troops and money, and his situation was becoming hopeless.

Then Joan, who was now a teenager, said that she had been hearing voices and seeing visions. She claimed to have seen the Catholic saints Catherine and Margaret and the Archangel Michael. She said that the voices of the saints told her to go to Charles and help him become king.

Joan believed that it was her mission to do just that. First, she went to the nearby town of Vancouleurs to see the military commander there. At first the commander laughed at Joan, but eventually she convinced him to take her seriously. The commander escorted Joan to see Charles.

Charles had no options left. Maybe that is why he decided to give Joan a chance. Even though she had no military experience, he gave her troops to command. Joan led her troops to Orleans, which had been under siege by the English. She led the troops into battle, carrying her white banner with images of angels and the French fleur-de-lis. In ten days, Joan's troops had broken the siege and routed the English. She earned the affectionate title, the Maid of Orleans.

Now she was ready to lead Charles to Reims, the city where French kings were crowned. Along the way, Joan's troops faced more battles, but they reached their destination, and there, at the Cathedral of Reims, Charles was crowned King Charles VII in 1429.

Once he was crowned, Charles had little desire to continue the war, but Joan wanted to take back Paris. She began her move towards the city, winning battles along the way, but then in 1430, she was captured just outside of Paris in the town of Compiegne.

Her captors, the Burgundians, were French people who supported the English, and they sold Joan to the English. Although France tried to pay a ransom to get Joan back, the English refused to give her up. The English, along with a Catholic court, put Joan on trial. She was charged with heresy, which means going against the teachings of the church, and also with wearing men's clothing.

Joan was declared guilty and sent to prison. There, after she allegedly preached heresy and wore men's clothing again, she was sentenced to death. Joan was tied to a pillar and burned alive. She was 20 years old.

After her death, her family appealed her conviction to clear her name. Joan was found innocent, and declared a martyr, which means someone who died for her religion. Much later, in 1920, the Catholic Church declared Joan of Arc a saint.

Her campaign had been the turning point in the Hundred Years' War. Her life had been an inspiration to many.

**Objective 4 Homework Assignment**

Directions: Read the articles. Then answer the questions below in complete sentences on a separate piece of paper:

1. How was the Black Death spread from one person to another?
2. What did people do to try to treat the Black Death?
3. Why was the 100 Year’s War fought?
4. What changes occurred in Europe as a result of the 100 Year’s War?
5. How did Joan of Arc help the French army?
6. Why was Joan of Arc killed?