## Crises of the 14th Century Name:

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| **Little Ice Age and its Consequences** |
| **Little Ice Age**: human society is extremely susceptible to changes in the climate. Before 1300, the world was going through an unusually warm stretch of climate known as the Medieval Warm Period. During this time, most of the world increased in population and economic systems were generally successful.Around 1250, the warm period began to end. Around 1300, the global temperatures began to drop. The Little Ice Age is not a dramatic event. In fact, barely anyone noticed it happened for hundreds of years. The Little Ice Age amounted to a change of -1 to -2 degrees Celcius compared to the global norm of the last 2000 years. However, its effect was devastating. Farming systems failed all throughout the world in the 1300s. In China, the Mongol Yuan Dynasty experienced repeated famines before eventually collapsing. Famines can also be seen in India, West Africa, Middle East, and the Americas at the same time. In Europe, the Little Ice Age ruined feudalism, which was already a problematic system. After its onset, starvation became a regular problem for the Medieval Peasant. | **What is the Medieval Warm Period? How did it effect society?****When did the Warm period end? When did the ice age begin?****How much did worldwide temp drop during the Little Ice Age?****How did the Little Ice Age affect the world?** |
| **The Great Famine 1315-1317:** It took only a decade for the Little Ice Age to wreak havoc on Europe. Three bad harvest years in a row starting in 1315 created the worst famine in all of European history. The Great Famine saw millions die from starvation. Feudalism proved entirely incapable of fixing market conditions and even bread became too expensive for all but the wealthiest in society. People turned to banditry by the hundreds of thousands. Peasant rebellions rose against their lords just to desperately search the castle pantries. Women murdered their children so they didn’t have to feed them. Families sold children into slavery. Cannibalism was practiced for the first time in Europe in 40,000 years. A good harvest in 1318 is considered to have ended the famine but many of its conditions lasted until 1322. | **What started the Great Famine?****What are 4 effects of the Great Famine?** |
| **Peasant Revolts:** Peasant life was bad in the High Middle Ages, during the Medieval Warm Period. But it wasn’t so bad that people revolted. They complained, they often turned to crime, but they didn’t rise up in rebellion. During the Little Ice Age, peasant life became intolerable. There had been peasant uprisings before this but it became a common part of life. For example, in Germany there are 5 recorded peasant revolts from 1000-1300 and 60 from 1300-1550.Most of these revolts were unsuccessful but the constant and repeated threat of peasant violence helped to soften conditions on peasants and led to a general weakening of Feudalism. The economic system that would survive looked a lot like feudalism—with peasants and nobles—but gave the peasants a greater share of the wealth and was more resilient to famine. | **Why were there so many more revolts during the Little Ice Age compared to the Warm Period?****How did the revolts change Europe?** |
| **The Black Death** |
| You’ve already read about the black death but as a reminder: it was a horrible disease that killed at least a third of Europe, maybe two thirds. To the very religious people of Medieval Europe, it was seen as the end of the world and shook society to an enormous degree. | **Summarize the Black Death:** |
| **Effects on Economy:** the Black Death is characterized as having killed peasant and noble alike but truthfully it killed a lot more peasants. The result was that, when it was over, there weren’t that many peasants left. This meant that the average peasant was much more valuable as an economic asset. There weren’t that many people who knew how to farm. So they were paid more, they were given more land to work, they saw their lives improve dramatically. Combined with the Little Ice Age, the Black Death made feudalism impossible and eventually it ended almost everywhere in Europe. | **How did the Black Death affect the economy of Europe?** |
| **Effects on Religion:** most medieval Europeans believed that all events were caused by God. Therefore the Black Death was created by God. People saw this as a sign that God disapproved of something in their society. All of Europe looked to the Catholic Church at this time for answers but the church proved powerless in the face of the plague. After the plague, many viewed the church with growing suspicion and doubt, leading to a general weakening of its grip on culture. This mood eventually spawned the Reformation, during which many rejected the church entirely. | **In the eyes of a medieval person, what caused the Black Death?****Why did the Black Death make people question the church?** |
| **Wars** |
| This period also saw the longest and bloodiest European wars since the Fall of Rome. These can’t be connected with the Little Ice Age or Black Death. It just so happened that European politics added this extra cherry on top of the crap sundae that was the 14th century. |  |
| **The Big Ones**: the biggest of these wars were the Hundred Years War (1337-1453) between France and England, the Nine Polish-Teutonic Wars (1308-1521), and the Ottoman-Byzantine Wars (1265-1479). The damage of these wars was no so much their death toll as the economic fallout of fighting them. European governments did not make enough money to support long wars and so these wars added extra taxes to people already starving and took men away from their farms when they needed to be harvested. | **How long were each of the big wars?****Why were they so damaging?** |
| **The Sons of Violence**: one of the worst effects of these conflicts was the creation of mercenary groups. These wars needed lots of soldiers and governments paid a lot of extra money to hire groups of private soldiers called mercenaries. The problem was that when there was a break in the war or when it ended, the mercenaries suddenly had no income. They made their money by turning on the people. Most mercenary companies developed reputations for robbery, rape, and murder during peacetime. In France, it is probable that more people died from peacetime mercenary actions than died in all of the Hundred Years War. The governments, already straining to pay for the wars and deal with the famines and revolts, rarely had the money to deal with the mercenaries too, and they became a part of life. | **What were mercenaries paid to do? When would they have no jobs?****How did these mercenaries affect Europe?** |