



A History of the Middle Ages, 300-1500

By John M. Riddle

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This clear and comprehensive text covers the Middle Ages from the classical era to the late medieval period. Distinguished historian John Riddle provides a cogent analysis of the rulers, wars, and events—both natural and human—that defined the medieval era. Taking a broad geographical perspective, Riddle includes northern and eastern Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic states. Each, he convincingly shows, offered values and institutions—religious devotion, toleration and intolerance, laws, ways of thinking, and changing roles of women—that presaged modernity. In addition to traditional topics of pen, sword, and word, the author explores other driving forces such as science, religion, and technology in ways that previous textbooks have not. He also examines such often-overlooked issues as medieval gender roles and medicine and seminal events such as the crusades from the vantage point of both Muslims and eastern and western Christians.

In addition to a thorough chronological narrative, the text offers humanizing features to engage students. Each chapter opens with a theme-setting vignette about the lives of ordinary and extraordinary people. The book also introduces students to key controversies and themes in historiography by featuring in each chapter a prominent medieval historian and how his or her ideas have shaped contemporary thinking about the Middle Ages. Richly illustrated, this lively, engaging book will immerse readers in the medieval world, an era that shaped the foundation for the modern world.

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A History of the Middle Ages, 300-1500 By John M. Riddle Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #1132627 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Rowman Littlefield Publishers
- Published on: 2008-03-13
- Released on: 2008-03-13
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 10.07" h x 1.37" w x 7.09" l, 2.46 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 536 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

A lively and fascinating account of the Middle Ages. The intriguing vignettes that open each chapter set the scene for the issues and themes to be explored. Aspects of daily life are teased out not just from written records but also from archaeological remains, surgical instruments, and even analyses of bones and sewage deposits. This novel approach will be of particular interest to all readers wishing a cogent yet compelling account of events that defined the medieval period—an era in which the foundations were laid for what was to become modern science and ultimately the industrial revolution. (Emilie Savage-Smith)

The scope is superior to all other texts on the market—best coverage I have seen since Tierney and Painter's *Western Europe in the Middle Ages*. It is a book with good 'bones' and includes most of the essential material my students need. It also reads well and covers other tangential items that often go uncovered in lecture. (John Hosler)

In my upper-level overview course on Medieval European History, the biggest challenge I face is the lack of background my students have. This text gives them an understanding of Antiquity and an excellent rehearsal of Islamic history. My students love this book. They found it very helpful in explaining things I didn't have time to cover in class or that they ran into in their own research. A number said this was one of the books they would keep rather than selling back. That's a big compliment. This text is easier—and in my opinion more interesting—to read than many of the newer texts currently available, or the old-reliable Canter. It is better in its approach than the other popular versions and more up to date. (Wendy Turner)

Very comprehensive yet readable. The scope is a good balance between broad strokes and specific details. The impressive historiographic sections reinforce the historiography that I incorporate in my course. The author adeptly weaves humor and modern examples into the narrative to illustrate points about medieval history. Students really enjoyed this book, and they demonstrated greater comprehension of medieval history as a result. (Mary Kathryn Robinson)

Inclusive in its coverage and innovative in approach, John Riddle's survey of medieval history offers a first-rate introduction that will prove invaluable to those embarking on the study of this richly diverse period. Features of special note include Riddle's highlighting of key medieval texts and his evaluations of the contributions made by leading modern scholars to major historical debates. The list of judiciously selected Internet resources that supplements the bibliography at the end of each chapter will prove particularly useful to the new generation of readers. (Timothy Graham)

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About the Author

John M. Riddle is Alumni Distinguished Professor of History emeritus at North Carolina State University.

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