The Crusades Documents

1095: Pope’s Call for Crusade Embraced by Some Christians

The Byzantine emperor Alexius I urgently asked Pope Urban II for Christian knights to help him fight the Seljuk Turks. Although Roman popes and Byzantine emperors were longtime rivals, Urban agreed stating:

“From Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople comes a grievous report...an accursed race...has violently invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by pillage and fire. The noble race of Franks must come to the aid of their fellow Christians in the East. The infidel Turks are advancing into the heart of Eastern Christendom; Christians are being oppressed and attacked; churches and holy places are being defiled. Pilgrims are harassed and even prevented access to the Holy Land. The West must march to the defense of the East. Both knights and footmen, both rich and poor...strive to help expel [the Seljuks] from our Christian lands before it is too late... Remission of sins will be granted to those going thither. Let none hesitate; they must march next summer. Christ commands it!”

The pope promised forgiveness of sins and entrance into the kingdom of heaven for anyone who died in the Crusades. Serfs could obtain freedom from their lords. Citizens who enlisted were freed from paying taxes. Those who owed debts were allowed to pay them back without additional fees. Prisoners were released from jails, and sentences of death were commuted to life service in Palestine.

By 1096, thousands of knights were on their way to the Holy Land. What do you think Knights hoped to gain? The pope, too, had mixed motives. What do you think Urban II hoped to gain from the Crusades?

The First Crusade 1096-1099:
First Crusade Results in Bloody Capture of Jerusalem

At the urging of Pope Urban II in 1095, the First Crusade succeeded in taking Jerusalem and was the most successful from the European point of view. When Jerusalem fell in 1099, crusaders massacred and disgraced the dead bodies of 70,000 Muslims and Jews who were living there. An eyewitness stated: "In fact Jerusalem was taken from the north on the morning of Friday July 15, 1099. The population was put to the sword by the [crusaders]. In the [mosque near the summit of the city, the crusaders] slaughtered more than 70,000 people, among them a large number of Imams and Muslim scholars, devout men who had left their homelands to live lives of [holy] seclusion in the Holy Place. ” Then the leaders divided up the land into territories, each governed by a European feudal lord.

How could the actions of the First Crusaders cause future conflicts or problems?
The Second Crusade 1146-1148: Louis VII and Conrad III Lead Failed Second Crusade—Return Home Disgraced

The Second Crusade started when Europeans lost control of Edessa, territory that they had previously controlled, to the Muslims. Led by King Louis VII of France and King Conrad III of Germany, the Europeans failed to regain any land and the crusade was a failure from a European point of view. Almost 1 million people were involved in the Second Crusade. The crusaders changed direction for an unknown reason, and instead of attacking the Muslims who overthrew Edessa, they attacked the only Muslim friends the Christians had, who lived in the city of Damascus. This strategy only helped to unite all the Muslim nations together against the Christians.

In 1187, the Muslim leader Saladin prepared to try to take Jerusalem back from the Christians:

"If God blesses us by enabling us to drive His enemies out of Jerusalem, how fortunate and happy we would be! For Jerusalem has been controlled by the enemy for ninety-one years, during which time God has received nothing from us here in the way of adoration. At the same time, the zeal of the Muslim rulers to deliver it languished. Time passed, and so did many [in different] generations, while the Franks succeeded in rooting themselves strongly there. Now God has reserved the merit of its recovery for one house, the house of the sons of Ayyub [Saladin's family], in order to unite all hearts in appreciation of its members."

What reasons does Saladin give for retaking Jerusalem? What arguments does he use to inspire his listeners?

What are the similarities and differences between the arguments Pope Urban II and Saladin use to persuade their listeners?

The Third Crusade 1189-1192: Richard's Crusade for Jerusalem Ends in an Agreement

The Third Crusade was a response to Jerusalem's fall in 1187 to Salah al-Din (Saladin). Three great armies from Europe were led by Richard the Lion-hearted of England, Philip II of France, and the Holy Roman emperor Frederick Barbarossa, Europe's greatest warrior. However, Frederick accidentally drowned, the other two kings quarreled, and the whole crusade failed from a European point of view. The Third Crusade, while not as effective as the First Crusade, was the first significant gain (or reclaiming) of territory by the Christian Crusaders in 100 years. Richard signed a three-year truce with Saladin. Some of the Holy Land went to the Christians and some to the Muslims. Saladin still held Jerusalem, but he allowed Christians to make pilgrimages freely. The agreement was only for three years only because Richard believed he could return and retake Jerusalem. He never did.

Why do you think Richard and Saladin signed a truce? What do you think they hoped to accomplish?
The Fourth Crusade: 1202-1204:  
The Capture of Constantinople

Easily the most shameful of all the Crusades, the Fourth Crusade ended with no gains in the Holy Lands, but it captured a small Greek town on the Adriatic Sea, and twice-sacked Constantinople! Instead of going to Jerusalem, the Fourth Crusade went to the Byzantine Empire’s capital, Constantinople, for various reasons. The European armies looted (robbed) the city and overthrew the Byzantine emperor. A resident of Constantinople describes how crusaders attacked the city during the Fourth Crusade: “And so the streets, squares, houses of two and three stories, sacred places, nunnery, houses for nuns and monks, sacred churches, even the Great Church of God and the imperial palace, were filled with [European crusaders], all of them maddened by war and murderous in spirit, all clad in armor and bearing spears, swords and lances, as they [robbed] the sacred places and trampled on the divine things [and] ran riot over the holy vessels. ... Moreover, they tore children from their mothers and mothers from their children, fearing neither God’s anger nor man’s vengeance.” The main outcomes of the Fourth Crusade were to deepen the division between Greek and Latin Christianity and to hasten the Byzantine Empire’s decline.

Why was the Fourth Crusade considered shameful?

Based on what you have read, were the first four Crusades a success or failure for the Europeans? Why?

The Children’s Crusade 1212-1213:  
Children’s Crusade Tragedy: Slavery, Hunger, Disease

One of the most tragic events of the Crusades was the Children’s Crusade of 1212/1213. In 1212, thousands of children (ages 10-18 mostly from France and Germany) left for the Holy Lands to recapture Jerusalem joined by several lesser nobles and clergy. Most of the crusaders never reached the Holy Lands, many dying crossing the Alps. Others were captured and sold as slaves, few of them ever returned home. Some people believe that the Children’s Crusade was the impetus behind the “Pied Piper of Hamelin” legend. The Children’s Crusade appears in medieval sources, but historians have begun to question its authenticity.

If the Children’s Crusade did not take place, what would be the motivation behind such a strange tale?

The Fifth Crusade 1217-1221 & The Sixth Crusade 1228

The Seventh Crusade 1248-1254 & The Eighth Crusade 1270-1291

**Reconquista 1492: Jews and Muslims Expelled from Spain**
### Causes of the Crusades

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<tr>
<th>CAUSES</th>
<th>Religious, Political, Cultural or Economic?</th>
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<td>The desire to take control of Jerusalem away from Muslims.</td>
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<td>The belief that fighting in a crusade would give you forgiveness of sins.</td>
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<td>The chance to travel and make money.</td>
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<td>The desire to defend the Byzantine empire from Turks.</td>
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<td>The opportunity for younger sons of European nobles to get new land.</td>
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<td>The possibility of opening up new trade routes between Europe and the Middle East.</td>
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<td>To restore the right of Christians to make pilgrimages to the holy shrines in Jerusalem.</td>
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<td>To gain some of the fabulous riches of the East.</td>
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<td>To reunify the Orthodox and Latin branches of the Church under the Pope.</td>
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### Effects of the Crusades

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<th>Religious, Political, Cultural or Economic?</th>
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<td>Stimulated trade, introduced new products and technology, architecture, and the growing urban culture</td>
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<td>Led directly to the Turkish wars and expansion of the Ottoman Empire into the Balkans</td>
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<td>Expanded use of a money economy.</td>
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<td>Hardened Muslim attitudes towards Christians.</td>
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<td>Weakened Feudalism</td>
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<td>Transmitted Islamic science, philosophy, and medicine to the West</td>
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<td>Curious Europeans left to explore far-off places such as India and China. Broadened contacts with the Muslim world</td>
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<td>Increased the power of the monarchs. Rulers won new rights to collect taxes in order to support the Crusades.</td>
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Perspectives of the Crusades

Directions: Reading through the following sources, pay attention to and take note of the characteristics of the Crusades. Pay special attention to how different sources present the Crusades in a unique way.

Source #1: WESTERN EUROPEAN: Stephen, Count of Blois and Chartres, Crusader

Excerpt from a letter to his Wife Adele; Antioch, March 29

Count Stephen to Adele, his sweetest and most amiable wife, to his dear children, and to all his vassals of all ranks - his greeting and blessing,

You may be very sure, dearest, that the messenger whom I sent to give you pleasure, left me before Antioch safe and unharmed and through God’s grace in the greatest prosperity. And already at that time, together with all the chosen army of Christ, endowed with great valor by Him, we had been continuously advancing for twenty-three weeks toward the home of our Lord Jesus. You may know for certain, my beloved, that of gold, silver and many other kind of riches I now have twice as much as your love had assigned to me when I left you. For all our princes, with the common consent of the whole army, against my own wishes, have made me up to the present time the leader, chief and director of their whole expedition.

You have certainly heard that after the capture of the city of Nicaea we fought a great battle with the perfidious Turks and by God’s aid conquered them. Next we conquered for the Lord all Romania and afterwards Cappadocia. And we learned that there was a certain Turkish prince Assam, dwelling in Cappadocia; thither we directed our course. All his castles we conquered by force and compelled him to flee to a certain very strong castle situated on a high rock. We also gave the land of that Assam to one of our chiefs and in order that he might conquer the above-mentioned Assam, we left there with him many soldiers of Christ. Thence, continually following the wicked Turks, we drove them through the midst of Armenia, as far as the great river Euphrates. Having left all their baggage and beasts of burden on the bank, they fled across the river into Arabia.

(Source: Dana C. Munro, "Letters of the Crusaders", Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, Vol 1:4, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1896), 5-8)

Source #2: JEWISH PERSPECTIVE, Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson, c. 1140

In the year four thousand eight hundred and fifty-six (1096 in the Christian calendar), one thousand twenty eight of our exile...inflicted upon the Jewish people were the many evils related in all the admonitions. At this time an arrogant people, a people of strange speech, a nation bitter and impetuous, Frenchmen and Germans, set out for the Holy City, which had been desecrated by barbaric nations, there to seek their house of idolatry and banish the [Jews] and other citizens of the land and conquer the land for themselves. They decorated themselves prominently with their signs, placing a profane symbol - a horizontal line over a vertical one - on the vestments of every man and woman whose heart yearned to go on the stray path to the grave of their Messiah.

When the Jewish communities became aware of their intention, they resorted to the custom of our ancestors, repentance, prayer, and charity. The hands of the Holy Nation turned faint at this time, their hearts melted, and their strength flagged. They hid in their innermost rooms to escape the swirling sword. They subjected themselves to great endurance, abstaining from food and drink for three consecutive days and nights, and then fasting many days from sunrise to sunset, until their skin was shriveled and dry as wood upon their bones. And they cried out loudly and bitterly to God.

That year, Passover fell on Thursday, and the New Moon of the following month, Iyar, fell on Friday and the Sabbath. On the eighth day of Iyar, on the Sabbath, the foe attacked the community of Speyer and murdered eleven holy souls who sanctified their Creator on the holy Sabbath and refused to defile themselves by adopting the faith of their foe.
“The Franks arrived at dawn. It was carnage. As Ibn al-Athir described, ‘for three days they put people to the sword, killing more than a hundred thousand people and taking many prisoners...In Ma’arra our troops boiled pagan adults in cooking-pots; they impaled children on spits and devoured them grilled.’ While some of these descriptions might be a bit exaggerated, the people of the towns and villages near Ma’arra would never forget what they had seen and heard. The memory of these atrocities, preserved and transmitted by local poets and oral tradition, shaped an image of the Frank that would not easily fade. The chronicler Usamah Ibn Munquidh, born in the neighboring city of Shayzar three years before these events, would one day write,

‘All those who were well-informed about the Franks saw them as beasts superior in courage and fighting ardour but in nothing else, just as animals are superior in strength and aggression.’

This unkind assessment accurately reflects the impression made by the Franks upon their arrival in Syria: they aroused a mixture of fear and contempt, quite understandable on the part of an Arab nation which, while far superior in culture had lost all combative spirit. The Turks would never forget the cannibalism of the Occidentals. Throughout their epic literature, the Franks are invariably described as [cannibals].”

**Important note:** “Franks” is a term used to describe the Europeans in the Arab world. To these people, the wars between 1096 and 1204 were referred not as crusades, but as “the Frankish wars” or “the Frankish invasions.”
**Source #4: WESTERN EUROPEAN, Fulcher of Chartres, The Siege of Antioch**

In the year of the Lord 1098, after the region all around Antioch had been wholly devastated by the multitude of our people, the strong as well as the weak were more and more harassed by famine. At that time, the famished ate the shoots of beansweeds growing in the fields and many kids of herbs and unseasoned with salt; also thistles, which being not well cooked because of the deficiency of firewood, pricked the tongues of those eating them; also horses, asses, and camels, and dogs and rats. The poorer ones even ate the skins of the beasts and seeds of grain found in manure.

The endured winter’s cold, summer’s heat, and heavy rains for God. Their tents became old and torn and rotten from the continuation of rains. Because of this, many of them were covered by only the sky. So like gold thrice proved and purified sevenfold by fire, long predestined by God, I believe, and weighed by such a great calamity, they were cleansed of their sins. For even if the assassin’s sword had not failed, many, long agonizing, would have voluntarily completed a martyr’s course. Perhaps they borrowed the grace of such a great example from Saint Job, who, purifying his soul by the torments of his body, ever held God fast in mind. Those who fight with the heathen labor because of God.

...On a certain night, he sent twenty of our men over the wall by means of ladders made of ropes. Without delay, the gate was opened. The Franks, already prepared, entered the city. Forty of our soldiers, who previously entered by ropes, killed sixty Turks found there, guards of the tower. In a loud voice, altogether the Franks shouted, “God wills it! God wills it!” for this was our signal cry, when we were about to press forward on any enterprise.

**Source #5: EASTERN EUROPEAN: Nicetas Choniates, Byzantine Historian**

The Fourth Crusade was directed at Egypt. There were, however, a series of financial difficulties which enabled the Venetians, who had been hired as transportation providers, to divert the crusade to their own ends. First it attacked the Christian city of Zara, and then Constantinople itself. The result was the establishment of a series of Latin states in Greece and the Agean, and the permanent collapse of communion between Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates here gives an account of the sack of the city.

...How shall I begin to tell of the deeds wrought by these nefarious men! Alas, the images, which ought to have been adored, were trodden under foot! Alas, the relics of the holy martyrs were thrown into unclean places! Then was seen what one shudders to hear, namely, the divine body and blood of Christ was spilled upon the ground or thrown about. They snatched the precious reliquaries, thrust into their bosoms the ornaments which these contained, and used the broken remnants for pans and drinking cups, precursors of Anti-Christ, authors and heralds of his nefarious deeds which we momentarily expect. Manifestly, indeed, by that race then, just as formerly, Christ was robbed and insulted and His garments were divided by lot; only one thing was lacking, that His side, pierced by a spear, should pour rivers of divine blood on the ground.

Nor can the violation of the Great Church [note: Hagia Sophia] be listened to with equanimity. For the sacred altar, formed of all kinds of precious materials and admired by the whole world, was broken into bits and distributed among the soldiers, as was all the other sacred wealth of so great and infinite splendor.

When the sacred vases and utensils of unsurpassable art and grace and rare material, and the fine silver, wrought with gold, which encircled the screen of the tribunal and the ambo, of admirable workmanship, and the door and many other ornaments, were to be borne away as booty, mules and saddled horses were led to the very sanctuary of the temple. Some of these which were unable to keep their footing on the splendid and slippery pavement, were stabbed when they fell, so that the sacred pavement was polluted with blood and filth.