

Essay Questions for Western Civilization
Chapters 7-8: The Early Middle Ages

1. *Select 1 Essay question.*
2. *Essays must be at least 2 pages in length, typed, double-spaced, 1" margins, 12-14 pt. font, and must contain at least 2 valid citations. Citations may be from your text but are not limited to your text. Use of a citation outside of your text is a good thing.*
3. *Please recopy the question at the beginning of your essay and remember to include your name.*

A. Characterize the ascetic ideals of early Christian monks. What role did monasticism (monks and nuns) play in medieval society? Validate the statement “monks became the heroes of Christian civilization”.

B. What contributions did Germanic peoples make to the new political, economic, and social conditions of early European civilization? To what extent did the church alter Germanic society, particularly in regard to family and sexuality?

C. Contrast Germanic Customary Law with Roman Legal Precedent as exemplified in the Code of Justinian. What concept is the basis of the ordeal? What does it reveal about the nature of the society that used it?

D. What impact did Christianity and “Christian philosophy” have on the intellectual life of emerging European civilization? What importance did St. Augustine have in this? Identify other influential early Christian thinkers.

E. What were Justinian’s major goals and how did he try to achieve them? How successful was he in achieving them? Describe the Byzantine society Justinian left behind. What are his lasting legacies to western civilization?

F. Compare and contrast Byzantine, Islamic, and Western European civilizations during the middle ages. Include references to religious institutions, law, social structure, military security, and economy.

G. What were the direct contributions of Islam, Islamic scholarship and Islamic society to western civilization? In what ways did the western European reaction to Islam and Islamic conquest impact western civilization?

H. Identify the strengths and weaknesses of Charlemagne as conquerer and then as ruler. Discuss the political organization of the empire he created. Why did it not survive after his death? What were the lasting impacts of Carolingian thought on western civilization?

I. Describe completely feudalism and manorialism and their relationship to each other. Discuss the mutual obligations of lords and vassals. Why were these important to the system of fief-holding?

J. What positive and negative impacts did the Vikings make on the history and culture of medieval Europe? What factors changed their status as a threat in the eyes of other Europeans by 1100 AD. Where have Viking settlements become important centers of modern nations?