

The Economic Impact of the Crusades



ECONOMICS FOCUS War brings contact, and contact brings trade. Increased trade as a result of the Crusades dramatically changed life in Europe.



As you read, compare what life was like in Europe before and after the Crusades.

The period of the Crusades lasted 174 years, but of these, only 24 were spent fighting. As a result, there was a great deal of time in which there was non-violent contact. This contact caused widespread economic change to Europe.

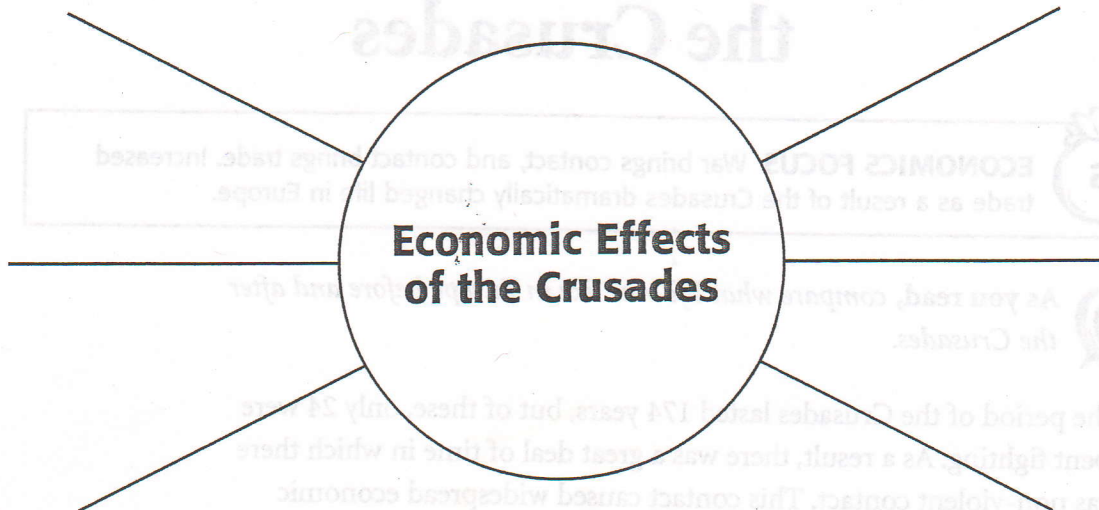
The first result of the contact was increased trade between Europe and the Middle East. Europeans obtained new foods and household goods. Items such as rice, coffee, spices, and new fruits were introduced to European palates. Making life easier in European households were goods such as mirrors, cotton cloth, and wheelbarrows. Muslims, in turn, were introduced to such items as linen and wool.

Tangible items were not the only goods exchanged between Europe and the Arab lands, however. Europeans learned new forms of recreation, such as the game of chess. In addition, Arabs gave Europeans a new number system, algebra, and chemistry. The Eastern windmill and irrigation ditch, both of which improved farming, were also introduced to Europe through the Crusades. European sailors began to use the Arabic compass and astrolabe to find better sea routes for their journeys. Eventually this led to the discovery of the New World.

This heightened level of trade led to the expansion of cities and towns. Among the cities especially affected were the Italian city-states. As the need to collect and distribute goods increased, cities along the coasts of the Italian peninsula became the centers of a new trading empire. This trend, along with the use of trade fairs, broke the isolation of self-sufficient manors.

The Crusaders had to carry money with them, so the use of gold coins and letters of credit also grew. To finance the crusades, the wealthy were taxed, and serfs were allowed to buy their freedom and sometimes their land. This increase in townspeople and free farmers eventually undermined feudalism.

Use the information in the passage to fill in the graphic organizer below.
Then answer the questions that follow.



WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

1. How did the Crusades weaken feudalism?

2. How did the population of Europe change as a result of the Crusades?

3. What new foods did Europeans obtain as a result of the Crusades? What new household items were Europeans introduced to?

4. **Critical Thinking: Synthesis** How did the Crusades influence the discovery of the New World?
