AIM: HOW DID THE BUBONIC PLAGUE SOCIALLY & ECONOMICALLY IMPACT MEDIEVAL EUROPE?

DEFINE PLAGUE:
What would be considered a modern day plague?
A Nursery Rhyme

Many victims of the plague were children, who were unable to take care of themselves even if they survived infection. This common nursery rhyme describes the Bubonic Plague.

Ring a-round the rosy
Pocket full of posies
Ashes, ashes!
We all fall down!

"Ring a-round the rosy" probably refers to rosary beads which are supposed to provide God’s help. Posies are flowers that were used to stop the odor of rotting bodies. Ashes refers to cremation of bodies. "We all fall down" is the final outcome of the plague.

1. What do we learn about the plague from this nursery rhyme?

2. In your opinion, why did children sing this nursery rhyme?
The English plague nursery rhyme

Ring around the rosy
A pocketful of posies
“Ashes, Ashes”
We all fall down.

Meaning:
Red rash around the mouth
Flowers to mask plague odors
Violent sneezing associated with plague
Death of all the infected
I. BUBONIC PLAGUE

a. Silk Roads spread bubonic plague across Eurasia in the 14th century.

b. In October 1347 a ship from the Crimea sailed into Messina. The crew had a "sickness clinging to their very bones."
Venetian and Genoese merchants established colonies in major trade ports of Alexandria, Constantinople, Cairo, Damascus, etc.
Boccaccio Describes the Arrival of the Bubonic Plague in Florence

Source: The Decameron (adapted from a translation by Richard Hooker)

In 1348, there came into the noble city of Florence, the most beautiful of all Italian cities, a deadly pestilence, which...several years earlier had originated in the Orient, where it destroyed countless lives, scarcely resting in one place before it moved to the next, and turning westward its strength grew monstrously. No human wisdom or foresight had any value: enormous amounts of refuse and manure were removed from the city by appointed officials, the sick were barred from entering the city, and many instructions were given to preserve health; just as useless were the humble supplications to God given not one time but many times in appointed processions, and all the other ways devout people called on God.

At the beginning of the spring of that year, that horrible plague began with its dolorous [misery causing] effects in a most awe-inspiring manner...[I]t began with swellings in the groin and armpit, in both men and women, some of which were as big as apples and some of which were shaped like eggs, some were small and others were large; the common people called these swellings gavoccioli. From these two parts of the body, the fatal gavoccioli would begin to spread and within a short while would appear over the entire body in various spots; the disease at this point began to take on the qualities of a deadly sickness, and the body would be covered with dark and livid spots, which would appear in great numbers on the arms, the thighs, and other parts of the body; some were large and widely spaced while some were small and bunched together. And just like the gavoccioli earlier, these were certain indications of coming death.

To cure these infirmities neither the advice of physicians nor the power of medicine appeared to have any value or profit; perhaps either the nature of the disease did not allow for any cure or the ignorance of the physicians...did not know how to cure it; as a consequence, very few were ever cured; all died three days after the appearance of the first outward signs, some lasted a little bit longer, some died a little bit more quickly, and some without fever or other symptoms.

1. What is the source of this passage?
2. According to the author, where did the plague originate?
3. What are the symptoms of people who are ill with the plague?
4. According to the author, why was the plague so difficult to treat?
c. Rats carrying fleas got on shore spreading disease
   Increased trade helped spread the plague.
   Close proximity, unsanitary conditions facilitated the spread into cities.

d. 25 million people died in the next several years, 1/4 to 1/3 of the population of Europe
   Population rebounded within 200 years.
The Black Death

Bubonic plague: The ‘Black Death’

Bubonic plague had been afflicting Europe and the Middle East for centuries before its best-known episode, the pandemic known as the Black Death, ravaged Western civilization between the 14th and 18th centuries. The disease is usually transmitted to humans from the bites of rodent fleas (flea-infested rats were a fixture of European cities in the Middle Ages). Plague still occurs in rural areas of the United States, mainly in the Southwest. Antibiotics are effective against it, but if a victim isn’t diagnosed and treated quickly, the bacteria will flood the body with toxins that cause internal bleeding, organ failure and death.

1. A flea picks up plague bacteria by feeding on an infected rat, squirrel, chipmunk or other rodent.
2. The flea bites a human and introduces the bacteria to the bloodstream.
3. The bacteria multiply and spread to lymph glands in the groin, armpit or neck.
4. The glands swell, forming painful “buboes” — hence the name bubonic plague. The bacteria may spread through the bloodstream (septicemic plague) and to the lungs (pneumonic plague).

“Plague Doctors” in 17th-century Europe wore elaborate protective costumes as one way of dealing with a contagion they did not understand and could not fight.

Victims “ate lunch with their friends and dinner with their ancestors in paradise”

- Geovanni Boccaccio
Spread of the Black Plague in Europe

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Physicians could not be found because they had died like the others. And those who could be found wanted vast sums in hand before they entered the house. And when they did enter, they checked the pulse, with face turned away. They inspected the urine from a distance and with something odoriferous [to block the smell] under their nose. Child abandoned the father, husband the wife, wife the husband, one brother the other, one sister the other. In all the city there was nothing to do but to carry the dead to a burial. And those who died had neither confessor nor other sacraments. And many died with no one looking after them. . . . At every church, or at most of them, they dug deep trenches, down to the waterline, wide and deep, depending on how large the parish was. And those who were responsible for the dead carried them on their backs in the night in which they died and threw them into the ditch, or else they paid a high price to those who would do it for them. The next morning, if there were many [bodies] in the trench, they covered them over with dirt. And then more bodies were put on top of them, with a little more dirt over those; they put layer on layer just like one puts layers of cheese in a lasagna.

1. What happened to people when they became sick with Bubonic plague?
2. Why was it so difficult to bury the dead?
II. SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE BUBONIC PLAGUE

a. The Church promised cures and explanations but did not have any, many clergy fled Europe.
b. The people believed that it was religious punishment.
c. They also blamed witchcraft
d. People also blamed Jews:
   1. Anti-Semitism: hatred of Jews
   2. Pogroms: Violent attacks on Jews
   3. Christians believed that Jews poisoned the wells to punish the Christians.
   4. Many Christians targeted Jews and destroyed many Jewish communities
The Cremation of Jews in Strasbourg, Germany on St. Valentine’s Day, February 14, 1349

Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it [the plague] through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells . . . and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from the Mediterranean into Germany, but not in Avignon, for the pope protected them there. Nevertheless they tortured a number of Jews in Berne and Zofingen [Switzerland] who then admitted that they had put poison into many wells, and they also found the poison in the wells. Thereupon they burnt the Jews in many towns. . . . On Saturday - that was St. Valentine’s Day - they burnt the Jews on a wooden platform in their cemetery. There were about two thousand of them. Those who wanted to baptize themselves were spared. Many small children were taken out of the fire and baptized against the will of their fathers and mothers. And everything that was owed to the Jews was cancelled, and the Jews had to surrender all pledges and notes that they had taken for debts. The council, however, took the cash that the Jews possessed and divided it among the working-men proportionately. The money was indeed the thing that killed the Jews. If they had been poor and if the feudal lords had not been in debt to them, they would not have been burnt. After this wealth was divided among the artisans some gave their share to the Cathedral or to the Church on the advice of their confessors.

1. What happened to many European Jews during the Bubonic Plague? Why were some Jews spared?
2. According to the author, why were the Jews really blamed for the plague?
III. ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE BUBONIC PLAGUE

a. Profound impact on manorial economy
   - Labor became scarce in some places.
   - Tenants, rent payers, made gains as feudal obligations were lowered.
   - Some serfs were freed to keep them from running away to better opportunities.
   - Wages rose in towns to keep workers happy

“The path to the Industrial Revolution began with the Black Death. The population fall increased labor mobility by creating many vacant farms, and that mobility undermined serfdom.”
- Robert Allen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Pre-Plague Population</th>
<th>Post-Plague Population</th>
<th>Population Decline</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England/Wales</td>
<td>3.7 Million</td>
<td>2.5 Million</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>400,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>600,000</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>13 million</td>
<td>8.2 million</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium/Luxembourg</td>
<td>2 million</td>
<td>800,000</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Roman Empire</td>
<td>17 million</td>
<td>12.5 million</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>7 million</td>
<td>5 million</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>10 million</td>
<td>7 million</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (selected areas)</td>
<td>53.2 million</td>
<td>37 million</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What was the population of England and Wales before and after the Bubonic Plague?
2. According to this chart, which country had the most casualties?
3. According to this chart, which country had the greatest mortality (death) rate?

9. Estimated Long-term Impact on Population of Europe (AD 1000 - 1600)
   Source: http://www.hyw.com/books/history/Black_De.htm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population in Millions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>1100</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>1150</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>1200</td>
<td>58</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1450</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. What was the population of Europe in 1345? In 1400? In 1500?
2. Based on this chart, what was the long-term impact of the Bubonic Plague on Europe?
AIM: HOW DID THE MAGNA CARTA LEGALLY TRANSFORM WESTERN EUROPE AND INFLUENCE CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL THOUGHT?
Magna Carta (1215)

Tyranny

Divine Rights of Kings

Declaration of Independence (1776)

Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)

U.S. Bill of Rights (1791)

“Giant steps for humanity!”
1. List the objects you see in the cartoon.

2. Explain the meaning of the cartoon's title and caption.

3. Explain the overall message of the cartoon.

4. Imagine you are either standing in the swamp or on top of the staircase. Write three sentences describing your perspective from where you are standing.
B. King John of England overtaxed people and the nobles, therefore abusing his power.

C. Also failed to reconquer Normandy from the French king, so some English barons rebelled against him.

D. 1215: King John agreed to sign the Magna Carta, the Great Charter of liberties, regulating the relationship between the king and his vassals.
I. RISE OF MONARCHY IN ENGLAND

A. William of Normandy conquered England in 1066.

Feudalism with centralized approach
E. EFFECTS OF THE MAGNA CARTA

- Created parliamentary system.

- Parliament must approve changes in taxation.

- Further, the charter established important individual rights that have a direct legacy in the American Bill of Rights.
Funny, it doesn't look like an iPad.
1. Read the excerpts from the Magna Carta and complete the following:
   - Underline unfamiliar words.
   - Write two questions you would like to have answered.
   - Highlight three limitations to the king’s power.

   **Magna Carta**
   “To none will we sell . . . deny . . . delay right or justice.”

More than seven hundred years have passed since that dramatic moment in 1215 when a group of bold English barons, determined at any cost to limit the power of King John, forced him to sign the Magna Carta. This ancient document, brittle and yellow with age, has been preserved as a priceless treasure, cherished not only in England, not only in the Western World, but by all men everywhere who believe that only under law can men be truly free.

In the Great Charter, the king agreed to certain limitations on his powers. Although the document did not protect the common people, it did represent a milestone in the history of human rights, for it served as a precedent for the growth of constitutional government. Evidence of how greatly American thinking was influenced by this document can be found in an examination of its provisions for due process of law, freedom of movement, and taxation only with the consent of the legislature.

**June 15, 1215**

**John,** by the grace of God, King of England, Lord of Ireland, Duke of Normandy and Aquitaine, and Earl of Anjou: to his archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, barons, justiciaries [royal judiciary officers], foresters, sheriffs, governors, officers, and to all bailiffs [sheriff’s deputies], and his faithful subjects – Greeting.

Know ye, that we, in the presence of God, . . . have confirmed [given assurance], for us and our heirs forever:

1. That the English Church shall be free, and shall have her whole rights and her liberties inviolable [safe from sudden change]; . . .

12. No scutage [tax for military purposes] nor aid shall be imposed in our kingdom, unless by the common council of our kingdom; excepting to redeem [ransom] our person, to make our eldest son a knight, and once to marry our eldest daughter, and not for these unless a reasonable aid shall be demanded . . .

14. And also to have the common council of the kingdom, we will cause to be summoned the archbishops, bishops, abbots, earls, and great barons, individually by our letters . . .

29. No Freeman shall be taken, or imprisoned, or be dispossessed of his Freehold, or Liberties, or free Customs, or be outlawed, or exiled, or any otherwise destroyed; nor will we pass upon him, nor condemn him, but by lawful Judgment of his Peers, or by the Law of the Land. We will sell to no man, we will not deny or defer to any man either Justice or Right.

30. All Merchants (if they were not openly prohibited before) shall have their safe and sure Conduct to depart out of England, to come into England, to tarry in, and go through England, as well by Land as by Water, to buy and sell

   *due process of law:* in this case, freedom from arbitrary arrest and unreasonable searches and seizures.
   *aid:* a tax or payment paid by a vassal to a feudal lord.
   *desseised:* in this case, have property taken away
2. Read introduction about the importance of the Magna Carta to history on page 1 of the worksheet and then answer the question that follows:

Summarize the main reasons the author thinks the document is important and deserves to be called “Great?”


Richard I (the Lionheart) reigned over England but hardly in it (he spent nearly all his time warring abroad) from 1189-1199. His brother John, who succeeded him and reigned until 1216, inherited the wars and debts that were the results of French enmity and Richard’s spendthrift brawling. John also blundered into more trouble of his own: trouble with France, with the pope, and with the English church and barons, eventually made his situation untenable, until June 15, 1215, at Runnymead, he was forced to sign an agreement with his rebellious vassals that granted most of their demands.

The Magna Carta, or great charter, is sometimes presented as a forward-looking document because it appears as the basis of English liberties. In effect, it looked back to a feudal situation that already was becoming obsolete and tried to restore the anarchic conditions that had existed before royal power started to encroach on traditional feudal rights. There is little evidence that any of the signatories believed the instrument would be effective. The barons mistrusted the king—and with good reason, since he had no intention of keeping promises that tended to whittle away his power. It is this mutual suspicion that serves to explain the covenant, which follows, as a form of reinsurance, and perhaps also the strange provisions of paragraph 61.

An yet the great charter survives—not only a prominent factor when interpreted or misinterpreted in the cause of further English liberties, but also as a illustration of its day, the forms and intentions and aspirations of an unfamiliar age.

How is this interpretation different from the other?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excerpts</th>
<th>Explanation (In your own words)</th>
<th>Democratic Ideal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 39. No freeman shall be captured or imprisoned or...exiled..., except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land. | a. Rule of law  
b. Due process of law  
c. Consent of the governed  
d. Individual liberty  
e. Limited government |
| 40. To no one will we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice. | a. Rule of law  
b. Due process of law  
c. Consent of the governed  
d. Individual liberty  
e. Limited government |
| 61. The barons shall elect twenty-five of their number, and cause to be observed with all their might, the peace and liberties granted and confirmed to them by this charter. | a. Rule of law  
b. Due process of law  
c. Consent of the governed  
d. Individual liberty  
e. Limited government |

**Summarize:** Why is the document significant in establishing or extending self-government and individual liberty?

**Magna Carta**
Aim: How did Western Europe socially and economically revive during the High Middle Ages (1000-1500)?
Europe in the High Middle Ages
I. RISE OF REGIONAL STATES

A. Holy Roman Empire (Germany)
   “neither holy, nor Roman, nor an empire”
   Conflicts with church prevented creation of a powerful state

B. France
   Capetian dynasty consolidated feudal estates into a centralized government
     - Feudal monarchy

C. Italy
   Dominated by powerful city-states: Rome (papal state), Florence, Genoa, Milan, Venice, etc.
The Growth of Towns

Most people worked as farmers during the beginning of the Middle Ages because most of the population was needed to farm the land for food. As farming methods improved in the eleventh century, more people were able to leave their farms and earn their living by becoming craftsmen and traders. As these people came together to practice their trades, they formed the first towns.

The people in towns were free; they owed service and obedience to no lord. Instead, the people paid a tax to the lords who owned the land on which the town stood. The town’s government was led by a lord mayor and a council. These mayors and councilmen were generally chosen from among the wealthiest of the craftsmen and traders and they zealously guarded the rights and privileges of their town against outsiders. Towns were almost always fortified with high stone walls that encircled the town and patrolled by guards in case the lord decided to go back on his agreement.

Inside the walls were a myriad of specialized industries such as weaving, leather working, bakers and shoemaking, which provided many new jobs and many new goods. Merchants established new shops in the growing towns where there were many customers. Guards were needed to patrol the town walls and keep the peace, and musicians were needed to play at feasts and in civic processions. Bankers and lawyers arrived and set up there shops, developing a new middle class. There was no room for town residents to grow food, so peasants from the countryside came to sell their produce in markets and buy the specialized goods of the town at least once a week. Sometimes serfs tried to hide in the towns. If they could stay for one year and one day without their lords finding them, the serf would become a freeman. Towns helped to usher in new goods and new luxuries. They also helped to increase the quality of goods produced through regulation by trade guilds and ushered in the end of feudalism by providing people with options other than farming.

1. Describe the town’s government, businesses and social life.
II. EUROPEAN ECONOMIC REVIVAL

a. URBANIZATION INCREASED SPECIALIZATION OF LABOR

1. GUILDS created regulations between craftsmen.
   - Guilds (2 types: Merchant & Craft) enforced standards of quality, fixed prices, and served as a type of insurance; they were designed to prevent competition and to protect the members.
To become a "master" (one who could join a guild), one had to first be an "apprentice" (full-time trainee) for 3 to 12 years (with no pay except for room and board).

The person then had to be a "journeyman," working for wages before his product met guild standards for a "master."

Many guilds became “frozen” after 1300 as few (if any) new members were accepted.
Guilds had three types of members: masters, journeymen, and apprentices.
The carpenters' industry was of great importance in the days when timber was used so plentifully in the construction of houses. It was all the more so by reason of the increasing size of towns. Hence the carpenters soon organized themselves, charging an admission fee, regulating their social and fraternal activities, making rules for apprenticeship and membership, and protecting themselves and their customers from injustice. As was often the case on the continent, they received their charter from the city corporation.

... Be it known ... that in those times in which Theoderic and Henry Flaco were mayors of the citizens, they, with the advice and common consent of the officials of Richirzegcheide, agreed for the honor of St. John the Evangelist, for the sake of usefulness, to concede a fraternity to the carpenters who were petitioning them. And this was approved in the City Hall in the presence of the officials of Richirzegcheide. They shall have this fraternity by this law; that every carpenter wishing to join the said fraternity will give twelve solidi for the fraternity. And it was decreed that every apprentice, should pay four solidi on his entry. But others who are not of the craft of these brethren, and who wish to have the said fraternity, will give twenty-four denarii for the same fraternity. Also they ought to enjoy this law, that, whatever man or woman of the fraternity should depart this life, there will be given for his obsequies at death four pounds of wax; and, for his vigil, six men, who will watch diligently, are appointed; and, to his burial the men and women who are of the fraternity shall all be compelled to come. He who neglects to watch when he is ordered will give two denarii for satisfaction. Whoever is unwilling to be present at the funeral of a brother or sister, as has been said, will pay just as much.

Also it has been decreed that whatever guest or citizen sells the timber or other merchandise of the brethren to another, and does not pay for it on the next day at the latest, if the seller makes a complaint about it, whatever brother remains a debtor in such a way shall give ten denarii to the brethren for satisfaction. Also it has been decreed that if any of the said brethren who are said to be carpenters shall give their work to a guest or citizen, or shall promise him work, and then delay more than two weeks, if it be a citizen or guest who is impeded in this way, and if he complain about it, then the brother who hindered him by delay shall pay ten denarii for satisfaction to the brethren. Witnesses, etc.


1. What are some of the duties of the carpenter based on this document?

2. What is the purpose of this document?

3. Why are these documents necessary?
b. Specialized labor increased manufacturing.
   - Manufacturing focused on wool textiles.
   - Woolen textiles dominated by Italy and Flanders (Belgium).

c. Increased manufacturing led to increased trade.
   - Italian merchants dominated trade in the Mediterranean.
   - Increased involvement in the Afro-Eurasian trade network.
   - Silk Roads, Trans-Saharan, etc.

d. Hanseatic League promotes trade in northern Europe.
Trading Centers and the Hanseatic League

Two areas in Western Europe whose prosperity was owed to the rebirth of trade was Flanders, in modern Belgium and northern France and the cities of Italy. Italian cities like Venice developed a fleet of trading ships and became a major trade center by the end of the tenth century. While Venice and other Italian cities were busy trading in the Mediterranean, Flanders controlled trade in the north. Its success resulted from its location as the hub of trade routes that traveled across France, down the Rhine River in modern Germany, across the English Channel, and south from the Baltic Sea. Flanders, which produced fine woolen cloth from British raw wool, eventually became the textile headquarters of Europe.

The Germanic cities of Hamburg, Lubeck, and Bremen, all commercial centers on the North and Baltic Seas, formed the Hanseatic League. Eventually adding more than seventy cities to its membership, the league set up permanent trading centers in Flanders, Russia, England, and Scandinavia. The league ensured free trade among its members, eliminated piracy from the northern seas, and established regulations for fair trade. Markets and fairs also supplied avenues for the exchange for goods. Some European feudal lords set up fairs to sell imported goods and gained income by charging taxes on merchandise sold.

By the 12th century, trade developed between Flanders and Italy. As trade increased, demand for gold and silver coins arose. A money economy slowly began to emerge. A money economy is an economic system based on money rather than barter. Trading companies and banking firms were set up to manage the sale of goods. All of these practices were part of the rise of commercial capitalism, an economic system in which people invest in trade and goods in order to make profits.

1. Why was the city of Flanders important?

2. What was the Hanseatic League?

3. Why was commercial capitalism significant?
a. Status of women improved

- Chivalry promoted respect for women.
- Urbanization created more job opportunities for women
  - All-female guilds
  - Worked same jobs as their husbands.
- Increased veneration of the Virgin Mary
  - Mary symbolized ideals of womanhood, love, & sympathy
The Increasing Influence of Europe: A Walking Tour through AP World History Textbooks

Social Changes: Daily Life, Guilds and Urban Women

From World History

Medieval towns were surrounded by stone walls that were expensive to build, so the space within was precious. Consequently, most medieval cities featured narrow, winding streets with houses crowded against each other and second and third stories extending out over the streets. Because dwellings were built mostly of wood before the 14th century and candles and wood fires were used for light and heat, fire was a constant threat. Medieval cities burned rapidly once a fire started.

Most of the people who lived in cities were merchants involved in trade and artisans engaged in manufacturing a wide range of goods, such as cloth, metalwork, shoes, and leather goods. Generally, merchants and artisans had their own sections within a city. The merchant area included warehouses, inns and taverns. Artisan sections were usually divided along craft lines. From the 12th century on, craftspeople began to organize themselves into guilds, which regulated prices, wages, the quality and quantity of production and trade, and the recruitment, training, and certification of apprentices, journeymen, and masters. The guilds also helped to keep industrial and commercial interests at the forefront of a town’s civic agenda. By the 13th century, there were individual guilds for virtually every craft. Each craft had its own street where its activity was pursued.

The physical environment of medieval cities was not pleasant. They were dirty and smelled of animal and human wastes deposited in backyard privies or on the streets. The rivers in most cities were polluted with wastes, especially from the tanning and animal-slaughtering industries. Because of the pollution, cities did not use the rivers for drinking water but relied instead on wells...

In medieval cities, women, in addition to supervising the household, purchasing food and preparing meals, raising the children, and managing the family finances, were also often expected to help their husbands in their trades. Some women also developed their own trades to earn extra money. When some master craftspeople died, their widows even carried on their trades. Some women in medieval towns were thus able to lead lives of considerable independence.

From Ways of the World: A Global History

Between the 11th and 13th centuries, economic growth and urbanization offered European women substantial new opportunities. Women were active in a number of urban professions, such as weaving, brewing, milling grain, midwifery, small-scale retailing, laundering, spinning, and prostitution. In the 12th century, Paris, for example, a list of 100 occupations identified 86 as involving women workers, of which 6 were exclusively female. In England, women worked as silk weavers, hatmakers, tailors, brewers, and leather processors and were entitled to train female apprentices in some of these trades. In Frankfurt, about one-third of the crafts and trades were entirely female, another 40 percent were dominated by men, and the rest were open to both...

By the 15th century, such opportunities were declining. Most women’s guilds were gone, and women were restricted or banned from many others. Even brothels were run by men. Technological progress may have been one reason for this change. Water- and animal-powered grain mills replaced the hand-grinding previously undertaken by women, and larger looms making heavier cloth replaced the lighter looms that women had worked. Men increasingly took over these professions and trained their sons as apprentices, making it more difficult for women to remain active in these fields.

Reflection: How might the widespread establishment of merchant and craft guilds in Europe eventually help lead to an expansion of democratic reforms?