

# Grade 7 World History

## Oak Meadow Coursebook

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Grade



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## Grade 7



# The Age of Monarchs

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During the Middle Ages, the feudal system provided a framework for a worldly, or secular government. The Catholic Church was very powerful, not only in the religious life of the people, but in matters of politics and government as well. Around 1500, as the Middle Ages came to a close, European kings and queens began to gain in power. They worked to end the independence of cities and feudal territories, and create kingdoms in which everyone would be loyal only to them. Some became absolute monarchs in the 17th Century. An absolute monarch has unlimited power. This is what many people think of when they imagine the life of a king or queen.

The Age of Monarchs or Kings was a time when great change occurred in Europe. No longer was the Catholic Church in charge of the government or of people's rules for daily life. No longer were the feudal lords in power. Instead, the king held all the power. Indeed, many kings said they were responsible only to God himself, and could do anything they wanted. This "divine right of kings," as it was called, said that God gave this power directly to the monarch, and God was the only one who could remove a king from power, and that the people just had to put up with the situation.

As you can imagine, absolute monarchs posed problems for many people because everyone had to acknowledge their supreme power. Some monarchs expanded their empires considerably. As has been the case throughout history, some kings and queens were kind and did good things for their people, while others did not.

The Hapsburgs were the most powerful family in Western Europe in the 16th Century. They were the rulers of Austria, Spain, the Netherlands, Milan, Burgundy, territories in the New World, and later, Portugal. They had a huge empire, but still worked to enlarge it.

## The Age of Monarchs

(continued)

One member of the Hapsburg family, Philip II, ruled Spain from 1556 to 1598. His brother, Ferdinand, was the Archduke of Austria. Philip II was the most powerful monarch in Spanish history. He was a devout Catholic who saw himself as a protector of Catholicism. He attempted to end Protestantism, Judaism, and Islam in every place where he had control. His efforts to increase his power in Europe led to a number of wars. He also supported the Inquisition to root out non-Catholics, and was so successful in Spain that Protestantism never really took hold there.

Philip II decided he had to go to war against Queen Elizabeth I of England, because she helped Protestants in the Netherlands fight his attempts to establish Catholicism there. He planned his attack for two years, and finally sailed for England with 130 ships and 33,000 men. This group was called the Spanish Armada. England defeated the Armada, and about half the Spanish soldiers died—many because their ships sank off the rocky coast in the stormy North Sea.

This was a huge defeat for Spain, and its government had to declare bankruptcy. After Philip II died, the government was basically turned over to the nobles, and Spain's power declined.

A number of famous writers and artists lived in Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Among them were El Greco, a famous painter, and Miguel de Cervantes, who wrote a novel called *Don Quixote*, about a country gentleman who decides to travel about battling injustice, as if he were a knight. This novel has remained popular through the years, and is considered a very great work of literature.

In England, the Tudor family ruled from 1485–1603. Henry VII was the first Tudor king. He expanded foreign trade, and helped rebuild England's prosperity.

King Henry VIII of England, the most powerful of the Tudor monarchs, changed the entire relationship of the Catholic Church with the government of England. The pope, who is the head of the Catholic Church, had been an important political figure with a great deal of power. Henry argued with the pope. Henry wanted to divorce his wife and marry again, but the pope said he couldn't do it. Because Henry was determined to remarry, he decreed that the pope was no longer the head of the Church in England, and that the king was.



## The Age of Monarchs

(continued)

English she spoke fluently in French, Italian, and Spanish, and knew Greek and Latin.

Elizabeth traveled around her kingdom, using her authority for the common good of her people and earning their loyalty and love. She told her troops, “I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart and stomach of a king..”

England thrived culturally under Elizabeth I’s reign. She never married, but her court was a magnificent place where writers, artists, and explorers were welcomed and encouraged. Artists painted miniatures, poets and writers praised Elizabeth in their creations, William Shakespeare wrote his plays, and the theater flourished.

During Elizabeth’s reign, the Church of England became officially Protestant, but unlike many other rulers of the 16th Century, she did not go out of her way to persecute people of other faiths.

Elizabeth was not an absolute monarch in the way Philip II had been. Tudor England had a parliament—a group of twelve to fifteen nobles who advised the queen and had some power to withhold their approval in order to prevent her from making decisions with which they did not agree.

1. Choose one of these assignments:

- a. Research and write a brief biography of Shakespeare.
- b. View a film of one of Shakespeare’s plays, or a live presentation, and write a summary or critique. (One option would be to see *Romeo and Juliet*, and then the video of the musical, *West Side Story*, which is based on this play, and compare the two.) If you like, choose a play about a monarch, such as *Henry V*, or *Richard III*.
- c. Memorize one of Shakespeare’s sonnets and present it on tape for your teacher to hear. Or, dramatize a scene from one of his



Romeo and Juliet



## The Age of Monarchs

*(continued)*

During the Age of Kings, nobles and kings had a great deal of leisure time, and enjoyed games and sports activities. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, they played an early version of tennis. The game of cricket started in England at around the same time. Cock-fighting, a cruel and violent sport which involved betting on roosters trained to fight, sometimes to the death, was popular among men. Wealthy noblemen enjoyed fox hunting. Common folks as well as noblemen attended horse races and bear or bull baiting. Bear and bull baiting, like cock-fighting, was a vicious game which resulted in the death of the poor bear or bull tormented for the sport of the audience.

Noblemen of the 17th century loved to play cards. The cards were elaborately decorated with exotic pictures and fanciful designs. Sometimes they held portraits of the rulers who played with them. Gambling went on for hours, with whole fortunes being won and lost during the course of an evening.

Fencing and shooting were popular “gentlemanly” sports that unfortunately sometimes left their participants dead or seriously injured. Gentleman might engage in these activities as a way to settle an argument or to save face after exchanging insults.

While Louis XIV is legendary because of his sumptuous court, there are many other monarchs who are worth knowing about. Other notable absolute monarchs in Europe during this time include Henry IV of France, Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu (who was not a king, but had great power in France), Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain, Charles V, Peter the Great of Russia, and Frederick William I of Prussia.

### 2. Complete one of the following assignments:

- a. Choose one of the monarchs listed in the preceding paragraph. Read about the ruler of your choice and write a page about his or her life, kingdom, and accomplishments. Do you think you would like to have known this person? Why or why not? If you would prefer, you may write this assignment as a story about a day in the court of your chosen monarch, or you could write a skit, act it out, and videotape it to share with your teacher.

Henry IV of France (also known as Henri of Navarre)

Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu

Ferdinand and Isabela



## The Age of Monarchs

(continued)

had many rights, it often takes a long time for them to realize that maybe life doesn't have to be that way. They are so used to being powerless they don't realize that within them is the strength and ability to make major changes in their circumstances. Little by little, as they become increasingly unhappy and angry with the oppression they live under, strength and determination begins to rise up within them. They begin talking with each other and sharing their dreams of freedom. They talk about having the power to make their own laws and vote for their own leaders. Soon there are many people joined together making plans. Then the real fight begins.

4. Choose one of these assignments:

- a. Read newspapers and magazines for two days and cut out all of the articles you find about people fighting for their freedoms. If you don't find any the first two days, keep looking. If you don't find any all week, put this project on your list for next week. Write a one-paragraph summary about each of the issues you have found in your newspaper articles. Tell what the issues are and discuss possible viewpoints about each of them.
- b. Write a short essay about a modern fight for freedom in progress anywhere in the world right now. Include a brief discussion of the history, main issues, and the current status of the conflict.

Extra Credit: A card game called *whist* evolved in the 18th Century from an earlier game called *triumph*. Whist later evolved into contract bridge and some other games. For fun, learn to play whist or contract bridge.

Extra Book Ideas:

*Mary, Queen of Scots* by Antonia Fraser

*The Tudors* by Josephine Ross

## Grade 7



# The Mughal Empire

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So far we have discussed events only in Europe. Of course, Europe is just one part of the world, and there were plenty of interesting things going on in the rest of the world. India is one of those places. In order to tell you about the events in India during the 1500's and beyond, it is necessary to backtrack a bit.

The very early rulers of India were known as the Guptas. Their dynasty lasted from about 320 to 467 A.D., and is sometimes referred to as *India's Golden Age*. There are very few written stories about these early times, but there are many oral tales that have been passed down from one generation to the next. This oral tradition, common around the world, usually gets most of the facts reasonably accurately, but doesn't pay much attention to dates. So it is hard to know exactly what happened when in very early history. We do know, from stories told by a Chinese monk who traveled in India to learn more about Buddhism, that in the first part of the 5th Century, life in India was peaceful and prosperous. There were free government-run hospitals for those who needed medical help, and this monk felt safe traveling, even though he was a stranger from a different country.

Some important scientific breakthroughs occurred during the golden age. Indian doctors figured out a way to give injections of cowpox to help stop epidemics of smallpox. This was a thousand years before anything like this was tried in Europe! Also, Indian surgeons knew how to set broken bones, do minor plastic surgery to repair ears and noses, and sterilize their tools. Mathematicians of the Gupta period were the first to use a number system based on ten, and understood the concept of zero. These may seem commonplace to us today because we have grown up in a culture that has long known about them, but in those days these ideas were new and amazing.

## The Mughal Empire

*(continued)*

The Gupta Dynasty came to an end after constant attack by the Huns, a barbaric tribe from the Asian continent. For the next six hundred years, northern India was in a constant state of chaos. One of the new ruling groups during these years was the Rajputs, or “sons of kings.” They were members of the Kshatriya caste - the second highest caste - and they lived by a strict code of honor. While women had some property rights and were respected to a degree, they were expected to be so devoted to their husbands that if a woman’s husband died, she was supposed to throw herself into the flames of the funeral pyre and be burned with him.

Hinduism and Buddhism became intertwined under Gupta rule. Statues of Buddha were worshipped in Hindu temples, and Hindu priests taught that the Buddha was an incarnation of their god, Vishnu.

Islam was one of the newest religions of the world in the 8th Century, and Hinduism was one of the oldest. The relationship between their followers has been difficult ever since the 700’s. Muslim warriors invaded India over many centuries, setting up their own kingdoms and plundering the wealth of gold and silver that belonged to India. The Rajput princes used elephants against the invaders, but to no avail. Soon the Muslims controlled northern India, with Delhi as their capital. These rulers are known as the Delhi sultans.

Two Delhi sultans are worth describing. One was a terribly violent man named Muhammad Tughluq, who murdered his own father, and committed numerous atrocities such as forcing the wife and children of one his nephews, who was a rebel, to eat some of the flesh of the dead nephew. He also ordered the evacuation of Delhi, forcing the people to walk 600 miles to a new capital. He was probably the worst of the sultans. The best may have been Firuz Shah. He was a cultured man who believed in social reform, and put his beliefs into action by setting up an employment agency for young men and a marriage bureau which helped find husbands for young women. He also constructed over 2,000 gardens and built five canals.

One of the more positive effects of the Delhi Sultanate was that because India had centralized rule, cities grew and trade expanded. More land was cultivated, so more food was produced.

Most Indians were Hindus. Profound religious differences created problems between the Hindus and Muslims, and many Hindus were killed, and their land confiscated. As you learned in Sixth Grade, Hindus



## The Mughal Empire

(continued)



Akbar

controlled almost all of northern India and a large part of the Deccan (the large plateau that occupies the middle of India).

1. Look at a map of India so you can see the area to which we are referring.

Akbar was interested in knowledge of all kinds, and hosted many scholars at his court. He, himself, never learned to read or write.

He loved to engage in lively conversation with educated people, and learned from

each of them. Indulging his love of culture, he brought forty-five artists from all over India, Central Asia, and Persia to make over 200 miniature paintings illustrating a series of stories called *Tuti-nama*, or *Tales of a Parrot*.

He slept only three hours a night, and spent many hours dreaming of new projects and inventions. One of these inventions was a huge cannon that could fire fourteen balls at one time.

It was important to Akbar to have a unified country. "For an empire ruled by one head, it is a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves," he said. With Hindus outnumbering Muslims by about four to one, this was a difficult task. He decided that, instead of seeking revenge on the Rajputs he had conquered, it would be better to include them. So he married a Rajput princess, allowed Hindus to hold important government jobs, and devised new codes of law which were meant to apply equally to everyone. He also established a fair tax law, and lowered taxes in years when there was famine in the land. Historically, non-Muslims had been charged a special tax, but Akbar did away with this.

Akbar also believed in religious tolerance. He was very open-minded, and, although born and raised a Muslim, he began to think that maybe there was some truth in Hinduism as well. Jesuit priests traveled through his land teaching their beliefs, and he was interested in hearing what they



## The Mughal Empire

*(continued)*

could be built. It is said he kept a mirror in his prison room so he could see the reflection of his wife’s tomb from his window for the last eight years of his life. At his death, he was buried in the Taj Mahal next to his beloved queen.

2. Look at pictures of the Taj Mahal. It is one of the most beautiful buildings in the world. If you can find pictures of any other Muslim architecture, look at a variety of structures. Do you see any similarities? What kinds of patterns (architectural styles, artistic designs and carvings etc.) do you see? Write at least a paragraph describing what you find.

Shah Jahan’s son, Aurangzeb, was the last strong Mughal ruler. He was ruthless in his desire for power. He not only imprisoned his father, but killed four other family members who stood between him and the throne,



The Taj Mahal

then seized control of the empire. He expanded the empire to include almost all of India, and created many problems in the process. He destroyed many Hindu temples, reestablished the old tax on non-Muslims, and sent the artists and scholars away from court. He was involved in almost constant warfare, which eventually weakened his empire. The Mughal Empire almost entirely ended with his death in 1707, although his descendants continued to rule India with greatly reduced power until 1857.

Extra Credit: Go to the library or look at resource books with pictures of Mughal art. You will see that there is a particular style which is very different from European art of the same era. Describe at least one scene in writing. If you enjoy drawing, see if you can imitate this style.

