

**MEDIEVAL VENICE: THE
FOURTH CRUSADE:
CHRISTIANS VS.
CHRISTIANS**



MEDIEVAL VENICE: THE FOURTH CRUSADE: CHRISTIANS VS. CHRISTIANS

Description

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the story behind the Fourth Crusade, what role the Venetians played in the campaign, and how the Fourth Crusade led to the dominance of Venice in Medieval European affairs and ultimately to the fall of Byzantium.

Subjects

World History
European History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Doge's Palace, Venice
- St. Mark's Basilica, Venice
- Basilica Treasury, Venice
- Hagia Sophia, Istanbul
- Archaeological Museum, Istanbul

Essential Questions

- What was the Fourth Crusade? Why was it undertaken? What were its original goals?
- Why did the Venetians get involved in the Fourth Crusade? What was Venetian Doge Enrico Dandolo's role in the Fourth Crusade?
- Why did the crusaders end up in Constantinople? Why did they sack the ancient Christian city?

Academic Summary

In support of the eastern province [i.e., the Crusader states], in addition to the forgiveness of sins which we promise to those who, at their own expense, set out thither, and beside the papal protection which we give to those who aid that land, we have renewed the decree of the Lateran Council [of 1179], which excommunicated those Christians who shall furnish the Saracens with weapons, iron, or timbers for their galleys, and those who serve the Saracens as helmsmen or in any other way on their galleys and other piratical craft.... We furthermore excommunicated all those Christians who shall hereafter have anything to do with the Saracens either directly or indirectly, or shall attempt to give them aid in any way so long as the war between them and us shall last. But recently...your messengers came and explained to us that your city was suffering great loss by this our decree, because Venice does not engage in agriculture but in shipping and commerce. Nevertheless, we are led by the paternal love which we have for you to forbid you to aid the Saracens by selling them, giving them, or exchanging with them, iron, flax, pitch, sharp instruments, rope, weapons, galleys, ships, and timbers, whether hewn or in the rough. But for the present and until we order to the contrary, we permit those who are going to Egypt to carry other kinds of merchandise whenever it shall be necessary. In return for this favor you should be willing to go to the aid of the province of Jerusalem and you should not attempt to evade our apostolic command. For there is no doubt that he who [tries] shall be under divine condemnation.

Pope Innocent III, On the Crusade and Trade with Saracens: Letter to the Venetians, 1198

. . . 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.

Nay more, a certain harlot, a sharer in their guilt, a minister of the furies, a servant of the demons, a worker of incantations and poisonings, insulting Christ, sat in the patriarch's seat, singing an obscene song and dancing frequently. Nor, indeed, were these crimes committed and others left undone, on the ground that these were of lesser guilt, the others of greater. But with one consent all the most heinous sins and crimes were committed by all with equal zeal. Could those, who showed so great madness against God Himself, have spared the honorable matrons and maidens or the virgins consecrated to God?

No one was without a share in the grief. In the alleys, in the streets, in the temples, complaints, weeping, lamentations, grief, the groaning of men, the shrieks of women, wounds, rape, captivity, the separation of those most closely united. Nobles wandered about ignominiously, those of venerable age in tears, the rich in poverty. Thus it was in the streets, on the corners, in the temple, in the dens, for no place remained unassailed or defended the suppliants. All places everywhere were filled full of all kinds of crime. Oh, immortal God, how great the afflictions of the men, how great the distress!

Nicetas Chroniates (Byzantine Historian): The Sack of Constantinople, 1204

THE CRUSADERS OCCUPY THE CITY

The Marquis Boniface of Montferrat rode all along the shore to the palace of Bucoleon, and when he arrived there it surrendered, on condition that the lives of all therein should be spared. At Bucoleon were found the larger number of the great ladies who had fled to the castle, for there were found the sister [Agnes, sister of Philip Augustus, married successively to Alexius II., to Andronicus, and to Theodore Branas] of the King of France, who had been empress, and the sister [Margaret, sister of Emeric, King of Hungary, married to the Emperor Isaac, and afterwards to the Marquis of Montferrat.] of the King of Hungary, who had also been empress, and other ladies very many. Of the treasure that was found in that palace I cannot well speak, for there was so much that it was beyond end or counting.

At the same time that this palace was surrendered to the Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, did the palace of Blachernae surrender to Henry, the brother of Count Baldwin of Flanders, on condition that no hurt should be done to the bodies of those who were therein. There too was found much treasure, not less than in the palace of Bucoleon. Each garrisoned with his own people the castle that had been surrendered to him, and set a guard over the treasure. And the other people, spread abroad throughout the city, also gained much booty. The booty gained was so great that none could tell you the end of it: gold and silver, and vessels and precious stones, and samite, and cloth of silk, and robes fair and grey, and ermine, and every choicest thing found upon the earth. And well does Geoffry of Villehardouin the Marshal of Champagne, bear witness, that never, since the world was created, had so much booty been won in any city.

Every one took quarters where he pleased and of lodgings there was no stint. So the host of the pilgrims and of the Venetians found quarters, and greatly did they rejoice and give thanks because of the victory God had vouchsafed to them-for those who before had been poor were now in wealth and luxury. Thus they celebrated Palm Sunday and the Easter Day

following (25th April 1204) in the joy and honor that God had bestowed upon them. And well might they praise our Lord, since in all the host there were no more than twenty thousand armed men, one with another, and with the help of God they had conquered four hundred thousand men, or more, and in the strongest city in all the world - yea, a great city - and very well fortified.

Geoffrey de Villehardouin (French / Latin Historian): Chronicle of the Fourth Crusade and the Conquest of Constantinople, 1209

LXXIII. Then it was announced to all the host that all the Venetian and everyone else should go and hear the sermons on Sunday morning; [Apr 11, 1204] and they did so. Then the bishops preached to the army, the bishop of Soissons, the bishop of Troyes, the bishop of Havestaist [Halberstadt] master Jean Faicette [De Noyon, chancellor of Baldwin of Flanders], and the abbot of Loos, and they showed to the pilgrims that the war was a righteous one; for the Greeks were traitors and murderers, and also disloyal, since they had murdered their rightful lord, and were worse than Jews. Moreover, the bishops said that, by the authority of God and in the name of the pope, they would absolve all who attacked the Greeks. Then the bishops commanded the pilgrims to confess their sins and receive the communion devoutly; and said that they ought not to hesitate to attack the Greeks, for the latter were enemies of God. They also commanded that all the evil women should be sought out and sent away from the army to a distant place. This was done; the evil women were all put on a vessel and were sent very far away from the army.

Robert de Clari (French knight), The Capture of Constantinople, 13th century

While much of Europe was suffering through a dark age of poverty and misery as the medieval period dragged on, Venetians prospered, and the city's population swelled to over 60,000 citizens by 1100 CE, making it one of the largest and wealthiest cities in Europe in the late medieval period. Led by an elected leader called the "Doge" (an early Italian version of the Latin word "Dux" – the modern Italian version is "Duce"), the Venetian Republic was the richest state in Europe by late 12th century when knights from across Europe came calling looking for help. Like many of his predecessors over the preceding hundred years, Pope Innocent III had called for a new crusade to retake the holy city of Jerusalem when he was elected to the papacy in 1198. Unlike the previous crusades, however, which had been supported by the monarchs of Europe (Richard III of England had even led the 3rd Crusade in 1189), the financial burden for this latest adventure to the Holy Land would fall on the shoulders of knights themselves. They needed help and the Venetians seemed like the best possibility. Venice was flush with cash. The Doge, Enrico Dandolo, was a blind old man who might support the new crusade in an effort to help save his soul. Above all, as expert seamen controlling a large overseas maritime trading empire, the Venetians logistically had the means and the manpower to support the expedition.

The crusaders organized their army in 1199 and by 1201, representatives were in Venice negotiating passage and supplies. In order to entice the Venetians into supporting their ideas, the crusaders developed a new scheme, one that would allow the Venetians to make a profit from the adventure. Instead of going to Jerusalem directly, the knights would go to Egypt first, where they expected to be able to fill their pockets with enough gold to fund the entire expedition. In return, the Venetian republic was to provide transport ships, supplies, and an army of 12,000 soldiers. After tense negotiations, Dandolo agreed to support the expedition. The crusaders agreed to pay

85,000 in silver. Unfortunately, when the army assembled in Venice in May 1202, their funds to pay the Doge fell far short. Instead of sailing to the Holy Land, the Venetians and the Crusaders decided instead to attack Constantinople. The problem with the idea was that in 1202 Constantinople was a Christian city and the center of the Byzantine Orthodox Church. Crusader leaders that could not be swayed by promises of reward were convinced by a papal disputation granting them forgiveness for attacking the city.

On 23 Jun 1203, 60 war galleys and 50 large transports sailed for Constantinople with over 20,000 soldiers. The siege lasted almost a year, but the Latin crusaders eventually sacked the city. After taking the city, the crusaders proceeded to strip it of its wealth, destroying what they couldn't (or wouldn't) carry. Although reports from the Sack of Constantinople survive to the present day, most are biased one way or another. Nonetheless, a general accounting of the booty taken has emerged with a total value placed on the treasures of about 900,000 silver. The Venetians received somewhere in the neighborhood of 150,000 silver as well as a great deal of treasure and artifacts. The knights divided up the rest. So goes the spoils of war.

The Byzantines never recovered. Stripped of its wealth and unable to hold onto the rest of its empire, Constantinople would find itself surrounded by Ottoman Turks within two centuries, and the city itself would fall to Muslim forces by 1453. Venice, on the other hand, would use their booty from the Fourth Crusade to fund architectural and artistic works to make the city the jewel of the Adriatic.

Through the use of various primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the story behind the Fourth Crusade, what role the Venetians played in the campaign, and how the Fourth Crusade led to the dominance of Venice in Medieval European affairs and ultimately to the fall of Byzantium.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the story behind the Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople in 1204.
2. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain the role the Venetians played in the Fourth Crusade.
3. Students will identify, analyze, understand and be able to explain how the Fourth Crusade led to the dominance of the Venetian Republic in Medieval European affairs, while at the same time contributing ultimately to the fall of Byzantium.

Procedures

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: What was the original purpose of the crusades? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of the primary sources and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture – Fourth Crusade (20 min)
- Videos – The Fourth Crusade and 1204 Sack of Constantinople (2 videos, 15 min total)
- Independent Activity – Students read the sources and articles about Venice, the Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of the articles for homework to prepare for class discussion.
- Suggestion: Break students into groups and assign different articles to each group.
- Suggestion: See websites below for specific AP/Advanced reading selections.
- Group Activity – Socratic Discussion: What role did the Venetians play in the Fourth Crusade? How did the Fourth Crusade lead to the dominance of Venice in medieval European affairs? (20 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay / DBQ: Explain in detail how the story behind the Fourth Crusade, what role the Venetians played in the campaign, and how the Fourth Crusade led to the dominance of Venice in Medieval European affairs and also ultimately to the fall of Byzantium.
- Alternate Assessment for AP/Advanced Students – Essay / DBQ: Using specific examples from primary source documents from the time period, compare and contrast the different views of the sack of Constantinople as seen by Latin and Byzantine chroniclers.

Extension

On tour: Basilica di San Marco, Venezia

While on tour, students in Venice will visit St. Mark's Basilica, where they'll see for themselves the priceless splendor of the cathedral. The interior contains many of the greatest mosaics in the world. Students with a keen eye will also be able to see two vivid reminders of a dark day in Venetian history. Above the main entrance are four bronze horses (they're replicas – the originals are inside in a museum) stolen from Constantinople when Venetian knights sacked the old imperial Christian city during the Fourth Crusade. There is also a sculpture called the *Portrait of the Four Tetrarchs* that depicts a time between 293 and 313 when the empire was ruled by a "tetrarchy" or group of four rulers. The sculpture, made from Egyptian stone is embedded into the corner wall of the cathedral where it meets the Doge's Palace. The sculpture is of four unnamed Roman emperors embracing each other in a symbol of unity across the divided empire. It originally decorated one of the columns of the Philadelphion in Constantinople (a public square in the center of the old imperial city) before it was broken off and taken during the sacking of the city. The missing heel portion was found in Istanbul (modern day Constantinople) in excavations close to the Bodrum Mosque and today sits in the Istanbul Archaeology Museum. More artifacts from the sack of Constantinople are found in St. Mark's Treasury (inside the Basilica). Note: admission to the Basilica is free, but there is a small charge for visitors to see the Treasury. It is well worth it, as the treasury's collection contains artifacts from across the Western, Byzantine and Islamic world, some as old as the 5th century CE.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/4cde.asp
The Fourth Crusade 1204: Collected Sources (primary sources). From the Medieval Sourcebook at Fordham University. Outstanding collection of sources about the 4th crusade. Highly recommended for AP/Advanced students and teachers.
- www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/1204innocent.asp
Pope Innocent III – Reprimand of Papal Legate 1204 (primary source). Letter from the pope describing the horrors of the crusaders after sacking Constantinople, including rape and incest.
- www.shsu.edu/~his_ncp/1204.html
The Sack of Constantinople by the Crusaders (primary sources) – from Nicholas Pappas, Professor of History at Sam Houston State University (TX).
- www.lordsandladies.org/the-fourth-crusade.htm
The Fourth Crusade (website). Good basic information on the Venetians and the Fourth Crusade. Recommended for all students. Easy to understand, without too much information.
- www.the-orb.net/textbooks/crusade/fourthcru.html
The Fourth Crusade (website). Another good website on the fourth crusade, with easy to understand information. Recommended for all students.
- www.historynet.com/fourth-crusade.htm
Fourth Crusade (website)
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=VAGGcDDjULs
The Fourth Crusade of 1202-1204 (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=-NIM8dqXA-s
1204 Sack of Constantinople (video)
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=kx8SI7ZHSg0
The Building of Beautiful Venice (video). This 45-minute video, produced by History Channel International, is probably too long for most in-class showings, but it is well worth it, as it traces Venice's history since its founding during the 5th century. Highly recommended for students and teachers, even if it is seen out of class.

Background Information

- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fourth_Crusade
Fourth Crusade – Wikipedia article
- [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Constantinople_\(1204\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siege_of_Constantinople_(1204))
Siege of Constantinople (1204) – Wikipedia article
- en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enrico_Dandolo
Enrico Dandolo – Wikipedia article on the 90-year-old Doge of Venice who led Venetian troops in the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade.
- passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/venice

On the Road: Venice – from Passports Educational Travel

- [passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/venice_a_special_introduction](https://www.passports.com/group_leaders/on_the_road/italy/venice_a_special_introduction)
- On the Road: Venice: A Special Introduction – from Passports Educational Travel

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- [www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-chaucer-canterbury-
tales](https://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/medieval-britain-chaucer-canterbury-tales)
Medieval England – Geoffrey Chaucer: Canterbury Tales
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/england/magna-carta-of-1215
Medieval England – Magna Carta 1215
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/medieval-france-avignon-papacy
Medieval France – The Avignon Papacy 1309-1378
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/medieval-renaissance-venice-the-doge
Medieval / Renaissance Venice - The Doge: Merchant Rulers of the Republic
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/medieval-europe-black-death-of-1348
Medieval Europe – Bubonic Plague 1348
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/dante-inferno
Medieval Europe – Dante's Inferno
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/dante-paradiso
Medieval Europe – Dante's Paradiso
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/dante-purgatorio
Medieval Europe – Dante's Purgatorio
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/medieval-venice-basilica-di-san-marco
Medieval Venice – Basilica di San Marco
- [www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/medieval-venice-marco-polo-and-his-
travels](https://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/medieval-venice-marco-polo-and-his-travels)
Medieval Venice – Marco Polo
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/medieval-venice-fourth-crusade
Medieval Venice – Fourth Crusade
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/spain/al-andalus-islamic-spain
Al-Andalus – Islamic Spain 711-1492
- [www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-great-schism-of-
1054](https://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-great-schism-of-1054)
Great Schism of 1054 – Catholic vs. Orthodox
- [www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-fall-of-
constantinople-1453](https://www.passports.com/lesson_plans/turkey/byzantine-istanbul-fall-of-constantinople-1453)
Byzantine Istanbul – Fall of Constantinople 1453

Key Terms

- Byzantium/Byzantine
- Constantinople
- Crusade
- Doge
- Republic
- Sack (of a city)
- Venice

