

Lesson 2

READ THIS STORY #2, Advanced

The Crusades

During the Middle Ages, many Holy Wars were sanctioned by the Pope. All Christian men were urged to become part of a campaign to free the sacred shrines of Palestine from “the heathens” or nonbelievers in Christianity.

European sovereigns and knights set out to gain control of the lands in which Jesus had lived. These foreign military expeditions were called The Crusades, and they lasted for hundreds of years.

Knights put the sign of the cross on their armor. They took an oath to live pure lives in obedience and poverty, as if they were part of a religious community. Their task was to protect the routes of the pilgrims who were flocking to Jerusalem.

As defenders of the Church, the knights were given special rights. The Pope’s decree guaranteed salvation for their souls. It also offered an opportunity to win fame, collect booty, and capture estates or entire countries. For those wishing to escape a humdrum existence, the Crusades offered glorious adventure. Many knights eventually became quite powerful.

But the Crusades failed in their mission to rid Jerusalem of “the heathen.”