

AP European History/ Summer Assignment
Pillars of the Earth by Ken Follett

This assignment is a means to introduce students to the basic political, social and religious structures of the Middle Ages. A focused reading of this novel will give students an array of information and an overview of the most important elements of this period of history in a way that I hope will be interesting and enjoyable. This is a college level class and students are expected to be aware of and to discuss mature issues. This book has violence that reflects the realities of the struggle for power in the Middle Ages. It also has a rape that represents in raw form the way society treated women and the role of women during this period. If parents object to this content there is an alternative assignment available.

1. You are reading this novel to understand the structure of society, the church and the monarchy. What are the hierarchies involved in each of these sectors of society? How do people interact with one another? What are their roles? What was the role of women in this society? How were they treated? The role of peasants? etc.

THEREFORE: As you read this novel keep these ideas in mind. **Underline and annotate** those parts of the novel that you believe have something to do with understanding the answers to the above questions. Read with an historian's eye to understand the important structures that were the foundation of the Middle Ages.

2. Create visual diagrams, based on what you learned from reading the novel, that show the hierarchy of the Church, Society and the Political Structure of the Middle Ages (3 diagrams). For each level within a hierarchy indicate the name of a character from the book that exemplifies that position. **Due on the first day of class.**

3. Write a short (2 – 4 paragraphs) essay that describes the power struggles between the church and the aristocracy (including the monarch) depicted in the book. How does the balance of power change over the course of the novel? Use examples from the book.

4. These diagrams and short essay will be graded based on a result that shows thought, effort and evidence that you have thoroughly read the book.

5. The questions you will be asked (after a chance to discuss and ask questions when school begins in August) will be based on an understanding of these structures and a logical analysis of the power structure in England during the Middle Ages, that was a result.

Example:

1. Using a scene from *Pillars of the Earth* describe then analyze the tension between the Church and the Monarchy.

2. What does Jack learn from the Saracens? How does this show a difference between knowledge in Christian Europe and knowledge in the Muslim world?