

# What did the Crusades do for us?

There were lots of battles and wars during the time of the Crusades. But there were also times when there was peace and Christians and Muslims mixed with each other. As a result, all sorts of ideas from the two different cultures were exchanged. So what were these ideas? How did they affect life in Europe? And which side seemed to learn the most?

## Mission Objectives

- Understand how life in Europe changed and improved after contact with the Muslim world.
- Decide which change was most important and why.

## Before the Crusades

### New products

Crusaders brought back lots of things from the Holy Land. These included foods such as lemons, melons, apricots, sugar, syrup and spices like nutmeg and cinnamon. Cotton, silk and slippers changed the way people dressed. Muslims used pigeons to carry messages too – something that was copied in Europe.

The Muslims had been in contact with Christians from Europe long before the Crusades began. Muslims had conquered Spain in the seventh century and had traded with some of their European neighbours for centuries. But Christians from northern European countries like Germany, France and England had not had contact with the Muslims. They had very little respect for the Muslims at first and thought they were a godless, uncivilized people. They were in for a surprise! In times of peace, in between the fighting, the two sides mixed. Without a doubt the Christians learned the most!

### Technology

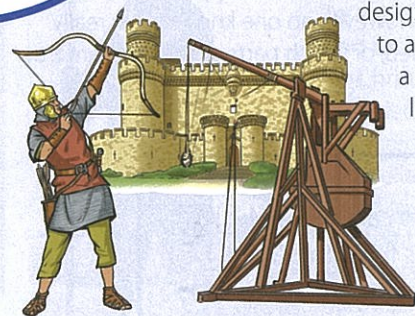
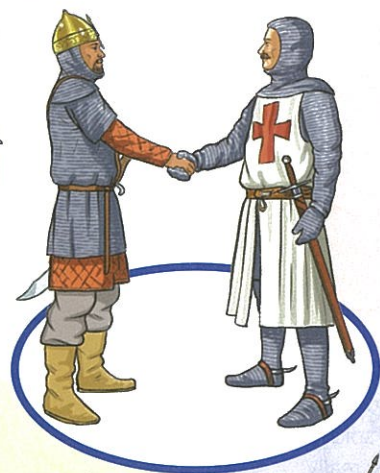
The Muslims thought that studying and education were very important. Because of this, they had made advances in science and technology that amazed the Christians. These included mirrors, the magnetic compass, the magnifying glass, and a tool that could measure the distance between stars. The Muslims had also made advances in sailing and improved surgical tools.

### Warfare

The Muslims used archers a lot. European armies, especially the English, started to use archers a lot too. They also copied Muslim castle designs and a weapon used to attack castles called a trebuchet, which was like a huge catapult.

### Knowledge

The Muslims used a number system that made complicated mathematics far easier. In fact, Arabic numbers are the ones we use today. The Muslims also had better maps. The works of the Ancient Greeks, which had been lost in Europe, had been translated by the Muslims. This meant that the ideas of Plato and Socrates could be re-discovered by the Europeans.



**SOURCE A:** The Crusaders learned the game of shah (or shatranj), which they called chess, from the Muslims.

*“When I used to enter the Aqsa Mosque, which was occupied by the Christian Crusaders who were my friends, they would leave so that I might pray in it. One day I entered this Mosque, said Allah is great and stood up in the act of praying. Upon this one of the Franks rushed on me, got hold of me and turned my face eastward. “This is the way thou should pray!” he said. A group of Christians seized him and repelled him from me. They apologised to me saying: “This is a stranger who has only recently arrived from the land of the Franks. He has never before seen anyone praying except eastward”.*”

**SOURCE B:** From a book written in the twelfth century by Usamah ibn Munqidh, a rich Muslim from Damascus.


*‘We who were Westerners find ourselves transformed into inhabitants of the East. The Italian or Frenchman of yesterday has become a citizen of the Holy Land. We have already forgotten our native land. Some men have already taken Syrian women as wives. Races utterly unlike each other live together in trust.’*

**SOURCE C:** Written by a Frenchman, Fulcher of Chartres, in around 1120.

*‘These people study no science and are more like animals than human beings. Those who live in England are so far away from the sun that they have become stupid.’*

**SOURCE E:** A Muslim scholar's opinion of the English Christian invaders.

## Work

- 1 Look at the diagram on the left-hand page.
  - a List all the things that they learned from fighting the Muslims.
  - b Now list all the things that they learned from living peacefully and talking to the Muslims.
  - c Which list is longer – fighting or talking? Explain why you think this is.
  - d Of all the things that Christians learned from the Crusades, which do you think was most important? Give reasons for your answer.
- 2 Look at **Sources B, C, D, and E.**
  - a For each source, explain in your own words the point that the writer is trying to make.
  - b What impression do these sources give you of relationships between some Muslims and Christians?
  - c If you were trying to find out about the Crusades, why would it be a bad idea to read only stories written by either a Muslim or a Christian? Why?
- 3  Look at the diagram that shows how much the Christians learned from the Muslims (page 70). Design a poster to show what the Crusaders learned and brought back from the Holy Land. You cannot use more than 15 words on your poster, but someone looking at it should be able to understand the importance of the Crusades.

*‘A man was accused of a crime, so they dropped him in water. Their idea was that if he was innocent he would sink, but if he was guilty he would float. This man did his best to sink but he could not do it. He was found guilty and they pierced his eyes with red hot metal – may Allah’s curse be upon them.’*

**SOURCE D:** Usamah ibn Munqidh writing about the way some Christians held trials to find out if someone was guilty or not.