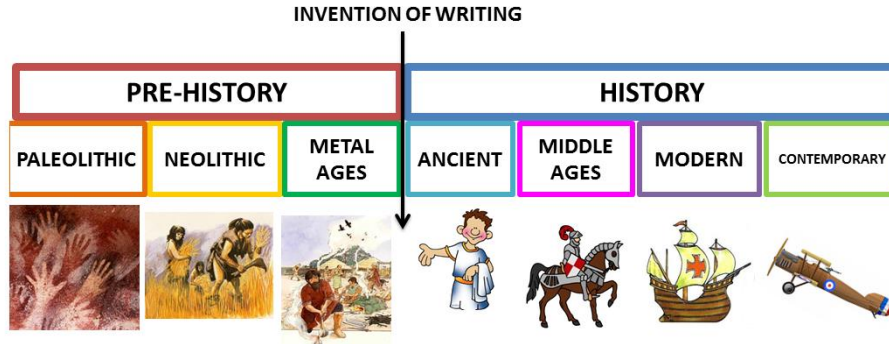




BASIC IDEAS: THE MIDDLE AGES

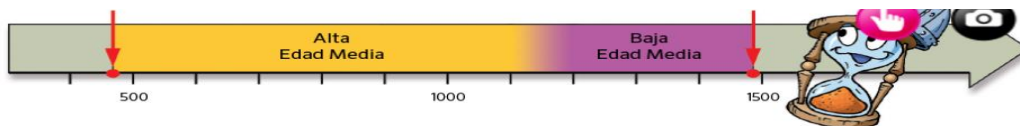
1. From Prehistory to History



The Fall of Rome didn't happen in a day, it happened over a long period of time. There were a number of reasons why the empire began to fail: the rulers of Rome became more corrupt, men no longer wanted to serve the army, there were internal civil wars and the Empire became so big that it was difficult to govern so it was divided into two parts: the Eastern Roman Empire (with capital city in Constantinople) and the Western Roman Empire (with capital city in Rome). Many historians consider AD 476 the end of the Roman Empire as the last Emperor of Rome was defeated by the Germanic barbarians. Romans called anyone living outside the Empire "barbarians".

476 Fall of the Roman Empire

1492 The discovery of America



2. Stage 1: The Germanic invasions: The Visigoths (5th – 8th centuries)

After the Roman Empire fell, the Middle Ages began in the **5th century** when the **Germanic tribes** settled in Hispania. The Visigoths established the **capital** of their kingdom in **Toledo** and adopted some of the Roman ways of life (they learnt **Latin**, converted to **Catholicism** and adopted some of the Roman ways of life); however (sin embargo), they also kept some of their **own customs** too. Visigothic society consisted of **a king, nobles** (came from wealthy families, often relatives of the king, who owned land and had considerable power) and **peasants** (who worked in the countryside on nobles' land in exchange for food and a place to live). The Visigoths built small stone churches and were excellent metal workers.

3. Stage 2: Muslim Hispania: Al-Andalus (8th – 15th centuries)

In **AD 711** (8th century) **Muslims**, from North Africa, invaded Visigothic Spain (the Iberian Peninsula). The only remaining Christian territory was in the north of the peninsula. Muslims called their conquered territory **Al-Andalus**.



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Al-Andalus society consisted of three **religious groups** who lived peacefully:

- **Muslims** (Islam): they were the most powerful group who owned the best land and were in charge of the government; They were respectful of other people's beliefs.
- **Mozarabs** were the Christians (Christianity);
 - The muladi were Christians who converted to Islam;
- and **Jews** (Judaism): they were a minority but they played an important role in politics, commerce and art.

Most people in Al-Andalus lived in **walled** towns and cities, surrounded by fields where farmers grew cereals, olives and grapes. Their main activities were **crafts and trade**. Some **parts of the city** were:

- **Medina** = city: where people lived;
- **Zoco** = market;
- **Mezquita** = mosque: where people prayed;
- **Alcazaba** = fort;
- **Alcazar** = fortified palace.

Some of **Muslims' contributions** to Spain were: advances in medicine, astronomy and mathematics, they built libraries and universities, they developed new methods of irrigation and introduced new crops (rice, oranges and aubergines).

4. Stage 3: The Reconquista (8th – 15th centuries) and the Christian Kingdoms (14th- 15th centuries)

Between the 8th and 10th centuries, the Christians from the north of the Iberian Peninsula created small kingdoms that were independent of Al-Andalus. In AD 722 king Pelayo won the battle of Covadonga (it was the first significant victory of the Christian kingdoms over the Muslims and the beginning of the Reconquista).

In the 11th century, Al-Andalus was divided into small independent kingdoms called **taifas**. The taifas were in constant conflict, which helped the Christians from the north expand into the south and reconquer Muslim territories.

When king **Fernando II of Aragón** and queen **Isabel I of Castilla** married, they (the **Catholic Monarchs**) united their two kingdoms creating one powerful **Christian kingdom**. In 1492 the Christians finally conquered the Kingdom of Granada. By this time, the **whole Iberian Peninsula was under the Christian rule**.

Feudalism was a **hierarchical** social system that was used in the Middle Ages. It consisted of different **groups of people**:



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- The **king** ruled the country and everything and everyone belonged to him.
- The **nobles** were loyal to the king. They were rich and lived in castles.
- The **knights** fought in the nobles' armies and the nobles gave them land.
- The **clergy** were religious people.
- **Peasants** lived in villages near the nobles' castles. Most peasants were **serfs**, so they weren't free people: they had to work on the nobles' land and give them part of their crops.

When trade started to expand, medieval cities grew. These cities were protected by large walls. Townspeople had to enter and leave the city through **fortified gateways**. The **streets** were very narrow and wooden houses were close together; fire was a great danger and diseases spread very people because people lived in bad conditions (no running water and no sewage system). Important buildings, such as the **cathedral and the town hall**, were in the **main square**. The main square was also where the **market** and fairs took place. Craftspeople and artisans made products which were bought and sold by merchants. Craftspeople who did the same type of work joined together to form **guilds**; they controlled the prices of the products and the quality of work.

5. Art in the Middle Ages

Spanish medieval art was varied due to the **influence of the different civilisations** on the Iberian Peninsula. We can identify these styles:

Islamic style	Romanesque style	Gothic style	Mudéjar style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horseshoe arches • Harmonious proportions • Mosaics • Patterns (repetition of geometric and natural motifs) • Domes • Open courtyards • No sculptures • Bright colours 	<p>Christian territories during the 11th and 12th centuries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small windows • Rounded arches • Thick walls • Low structures • Dark inside 	<p>Between the 13th and 16th centuries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stained-glass windows (showing scenes from the Bible) • Pointed arches • Thin walls • Tall structures • Rose windows 	<p>In the Christian kingdoms, Islamic style was mixed with the Romanesque or Gothic styles creating a new type of art called Mudéjar. This style developed in the 12th centuries.</p>