

The First Crusade

Lesson Map: <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education/SpatialActivity68>

Note to teachers

This learning material contains a large amount of content and a variety of primary/ancient sources, with accompanying links to student questions and sourcework.

It is aimed at a senior Ancient History audience and constitutes 2 – 3 lessons of content. However, aspects of this resource may also be useful for *Year 8 History: The Western and Islamic World – Medieval Europe*.

Engage

Historical context - religious and geographical climates prior to the First

Crusade

- ➔ Click on the URL above to open the Story Map (with built-in interactive maps). An immersive narrative on the First Crusade will open. Scroll down to get started.
- ➔ Read through the Historical context. Take notes if required. Stop to discuss as necessary.
 - Religious climate prior to the First Crusade
 - Geographical climate prior to the First Crusade

Explore

A Call to Crusade

- ➔ Scroll down to the heading titled *A Call to Crusade; Byzantine Emperor requests aid* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- ➔ Access the **excerpt of Alexius I Comnenus' letter to Robert of Flanders** (available via link in StoryMap). Read the source and answer the questions.
- ? Alexius I addresses Robert as, "illustrious count and great consoler of the faith...Your Prudence." What is the implicit purpose behind this address? Do you find this effective? Why/why not? [*Alexius I Comnenus likely addresses Robert as, "illustrious count and great consoler of the faith...Your Prudence," as it demonstrates a level of respect for Robert. Alexius may choose to address Robert in this way as this flattery will make Robert more likely to consider Alexius' plea for help. In this, it is effective*]

Download student worksheet [here](#).

Time

2-3 lessons

Activity

Investigate the causes, events, and outcomes of the First Crusade.

Learning Outcome

Students will be able to:

- Identify the causes of the First Crusade
- Identify and understand factors that led to the Crusader's victories in the First Crusade
- Explain change and continuity that occurred between 1070 - 1102
- Examine and analyse sources
- Develop historical arguments in response to a question/statement

ACARA Curriculum Link

[Senior Ancient History: Reconstructing the Ancient World – The Medieval Crusades](#)

[Year 8 History: The Western and Islamic world – Medieval Europe](#)

[ACDSEH050 | ACDSEH052 |](#)
[ACHHS148 | ACHHS152 |](#)
[ACHHS154 | ACHHS155 |](#)
[ACHHS156](#)

Teacher Feedback:

To share your feedback on this, or any Spatial Activity, please contact education@esriaustralia.com.au

as the Emperor is humbling himself to ask another for help.]

- ? According to Alexius I, identify and list the problems faced by Alexius and other believers. [*Alexius I identifies persecution at the hand of the Turks as the main problem being faced by believers in the East. He states that Christian blood is being spilt, that Christians are being subject to sodomy and other sins, and that Christians are being conquered.*]
- ? How does Emperor Alexius attempt to persuade/encourage the Count, Pope and would-be soldiers to come to his aid? Consider implicit **and** explicit messages. [*Emperor Alexius persuades Robert, the Pope and soldiers to come to his aid by implicitly suggesting that those who provide aid will have their reward of the riches lying in the cities and churches to the East and the beautiful women of the Orient. He explicitly suggests that religious duty should move all believers to act: "By coming, you will find your reward in heaven and, if you do not come, God will condemn you."*]
- ? Evaluate the usefulness of this source when considering the causes of the First Crusade. [*This source is useful when considering the causes of the First Crusade. In the letter, one can identify religious, economic and social motives that would have encouraged both prince and peasant to provide aid.*]
- ? Considering the religious split between the West and the East, what do you think Alexius' reaction would have been to tens of thousands of Crusaders showing up on the doorstep of his empire? [*As the East and West were often uncooperative with each other and rivalries existed between political and religious figures, Alexius I Comnenus was likely very alarmed and apprehensive when unprecedented numbers of Crusaders showed up at Constantinople. He asked for a peace-keeping army and instead received huge armies that answered to the Pope and Western princes.*]
- Scroll down to the heading titled *Pope Urban II's response* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- Access **Robert the Monk's record of Pope Urban II's speech** (available via link in StoryMap). Read the source and answer the questions.
- ? Provide three (3) examples of bias as found in Pope Urban II's speech at Clermont (3 quotes). Explain how each example is biased. [*1. "race of Franks...race chosen and beloved by God": portrays Christians in positive light, as righteous. 2. "...Persians, an accursed race, a race utterly alienated from God": juxtaposes righteous Christians with unrighteous heathens. 3: "God has conferred remarkable glory in arms, great courage...and strength": again, paints Christian knights in positive light.*]
- ? In the second paragraph, what does Pope Urban II call on the soldiers to achieve in this Crusade? [*Pope Urban II calls on soldiers to take part in, "the labour of avenging*

these wrongs [sin, murder, torture, rape] and of recovering this territory [the Holy Land].”.]

- ? What does Pope Urban II offer to the Crusaders that would encourage them to participate in this holy war? [*Urban II promises that all who participate in the Crusades, or who die along the way, “shall have immediate remission of their sins.” In other words, he is promising them an admission ticket to heaven.*]
- ? What other motives, as suggested in this source, are there for people to participate in the Crusade? [*He offers troublesome knights, soldiers, and men-at-arms an opportunity to gain honour and glory.*]
- ? Identify and explain two plausible motives as to why Pope Urban II was eager to respond with aid? Consider the fact that Emperor Alexius I was only after a peacekeeping force of knights. [*Pope Urban II may have been eager to respond to this call for aid as it would potentially allow him to extend and reassert his religious leadership over the Eastern Orthodox Church. Furthermore, if his Crusade was a success, it would serve to bolster both his and the Catholic Church’s religious and political power and influence.*]
- ? There are a number of recorded versions of the Pope’s speech at Clermont. Research Robert the Monk’s version and identify three (3) features of the source (analysis). Then, evaluate the source in terms of its reliability and usefulness. [*1. Robert claims to have been present (eye-witness) at Clermont when Pope Urban II delivered this speech. 2. Robert wrote the speech from memory, 12 or more years later. 3. Robert’s version of the speech appears more embellished and ‘dramatic’ in comparison to other versions. The source can be considered partially reliable as he appears to be present during the speech but inaccuracy – due to embellishment and the fact that it was recorded over a decade later – exists throughout. It remains useful to historians as it allows one to corroborate aspects of the speech with other accounts and provides an insight into political and religious motives in participating in the Crusade.*]

Explain

The First Crusade

- ➔ Scroll down to the heading titled *How did society react to Pope Urban II’s speech?* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading titled *The Princes’ Crusade sets out* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- ➔ Scroll down to the heading titled *Attacks on Jews* and read the information. Take

notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.

- Access **Albert of Aix's excerpt** (available via link in StoryMap). Read the source and answer the questions.
- ? Perform a 2-minute Google search on Albert of Aix. Who is he and what is his background? *[Albert of Aix was a canon (official) of the church of Aachen and historian of the First Crusade. He never visited the Holy Land and most of his works are a compilation of legends and eyewitness reports.]*
- ? In your own words, describe how Albert presented the actions of the Crusaders against the Jews. *[Albert of Aix clearly condemns the Crusaders' slaughter of the Jews. He refers to it as cruel and merciless and suggests that it wasn't the will of God, but rather the actions of the Crusaders themselves.]*
- ? Suggest reasons Albert may have had for presenting information in this way. *[Albert of Aix may have presented the information this way for a couple of reasons. Firstly, he may simply be recording the accounts of eyewitnesses. Secondly, his faith as a church official may have been genuine and he could not reconcile the idea that God would condone such violence against those who were not the Crusaders' enemies.]*
- ? Why might some historians, like Albert, be critical of the actions of the Crusaders? Does this bolster the reliability of the source? Why/why not?? *[Some historians may be critical of the actions of the Crusaders as there was a clear distinction as to what the goals of the Crusade were, compared to extra liberties the Crusaders seemed to take. The source can be considered more reliable as it provides an alternative viewpoint to the main narrative and does not gloss over the more negative aspects of the Crusade.]*
- Scroll down to the heading titled *Alexius Comnenus and the Crusaders* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- Scroll down to the heading titled *The Siege of Nicaea* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- Access the excerpt from **The Gesta Francorum** (available via link in StoryMap). Read the source and answer the questions.
- ? The Gesta account describes the two armies in very different lights. Explain how each army is described and use supporting evidence to justify both explanations. *[The Crusaders are described as superior soldiers, both physically, spiritually and morally as the Gesta Francorum states that they attacked, "the city so bravely and so fiercely." The source goes on to state that, "The Count...was protected by divine might, and with his most powerful army gloried in terrestrial strength," which*

suggests a spiritual and moral superiority. The Turks are described as inferior savages, which is evident when the source refers to them as a “barbarous horde.”]

- ? The language is prejudiced. Explain how this affects the reliability of the source. *[The language is clearly prejudiced in favour of the Crusades. This impacts negatively on the reliability of the source. Although it likely describes the general events of the siege accurately, the biased language likely means that other inaccuracies about the account of the siege exist too.]*
- ? Despite the prejudice evident in the language, how is the source still useful to historians. *[Despite the prejudice, the source is still useful as it provides insights into the events that transpired during the siege of Nicaea and does address both successes and setbacks that were experienced during the siege.]*
- Scroll down to the heading titled *The Battle of Dorylaeum* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- Scroll down to the heading titled *The Siege and Capture of Antioch* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- Scroll down to the heading titled *The Siege and Capture of Jerusalem* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.
- Access the 5 sources that investigate the **Fall of Jerusalem** (available via link in StoryMap). Read the source and answer the questions.
- ? Provide 2 specific pieces of evidence that demonstrate corroboration between any of the sources. In your response, explain how your evidence corroborates. *[Answers will vary depending on the sources chosen, and the selection of corroborating evidence.]*
- ? Provide 2 specific pieces of evidence that demonstrate contradiction between two or more sources. In your response, explain how your evidence corroborates. *[Answers will vary depending on the sources chosen, and the selection of contradicting evidence.]*
- ? Evaluate the reliability of Ibn Al-Athar’s account (Source 2). Consider addressing the following in your response: initial language, facts and figures, perspective, corroboration/contradiction. *[Ibn Al-Athar’s account appears highly reliable. The author adopts a factual tone that describes events as they were. This is supported by multiple pieces of factual information he includes in his account: dates, weights, and exact figures. Despite being Muslim, the perspective he provides appears detached from his racial and religious identity; this can be assumed as he speaks of both sides as if he were a third party. Furthermore, he is also able to identify that his side was*

partially responsible for the Crusaders' victory. Ibn Al-Athar's account corroborates the date that Ibn al-Qualanisi provides in his account. Al-Athar's account also corroborates the bloodshed that appears in the Christian sources.]

Extend

Constructing a historical argument

→ Access the 5 sources that investigate the **Fall of Jerusalem** (available via link in StoryMap). Read the source and answer the **Extension Question**:

? Respond to the following statement by putting forward a clear argument in paragraph form:

To what extent do medieval sources portray the capture of Jerusalem as ruthless and vicious? In your response, evaluate the reliability of source 2 and source 3.

[Answers will vary. Model response below.]

Medieval sources clearly portray the capture of Jerusalem as ruthless and vicious, which is evident in the indiscriminate killing and looting that took place. Christian and Muslim sources both make clear reference to large numbers of people being seemingly indiscriminately killed by the Crusaders, regardless of whether they were enemy soldiers or citizens. Ibn Al-Athar – who provides a Muslim perspective of the events – states that, “the Franks slaughtered more than 70,000 people, among them a large number of Imams and Muslim scholars” (n.d.). This is corroborated by the Gesta Francorum where it states that, “when the pagans had been overcome, our men seized great numbers, both men and women...killing them...as they wished” (1100-1101). Both sources also corroborate the avaricious way the Crusaders looted and pillaged the city. Ibn Al-Athar (n.d.) mentions that the Franks' greed had little regard for holy sites as they stripped the Dome of the Rock of its gold and silver candles, amongst other booty. Again, this avarice for treasures is echoed in the Gesta Francorum (1100-1101) stating, “the army scattered throughout the city and took possession of the gold and silver.” The word “scattered” suggests that the Crusaders adopted what appears to be an ‘every man for himself’ mentality as they looked to claim loot for their own pockets. Despite both sources being from different perspectives – Muslim and Christian – the accounts are reliable as they corroborate each other in multiple instances. Although the Gesta Francorum does not condemn the actions of the Crusaders in the source excerpt, it does not embellish their actions either; this suggests that it is an accurate portrayal of the events that took place. Likewise, the Muslim perspective provides a factual account of events and the author maintains a balanced perspective as no prejudiced language comes through in his account. As clearly depicted in both sources, the Crusaders achieved their goals in the First Crusade however, their capture of Jerusalem was a ruthless affair that was

followed immediately by avaricious looting.

- Scroll down to the heading titled *The First Crusade ends in success* and read the information. Take notes if required and stop to discuss as necessary.

Next Steps:

Request a free ArcGIS Online Account for your school:

Australian schools can request a free ArcGIS Online account as part of Esri Australia's Classroom GIS Initiative. A school subscription provides additional map layers, content, features and privacy.

Learn more about ArcGIS Online, and apply for your ArcGIS Online School subscription at <http://esriaustralia.com.au/education>