The Crisis of the Late Middle Ages
The late Middle Ages experienced a series of crises that laid the foundation for the beginning of a “renaissance” across Europe.
FOUR MAJOR AREAS OF CRISIS

- **Food crisis** - poor harvests/ famine/ shift in global climate
- **Challenges to the Roman Catholic Church**
- **Black Death**
- **100 Years War between France and England**
Agricultural Crisis

- Periods of severe weather-
  "mini-Ice Age"
  - poor harvests
  - Famines/depopulation
- Disease and epidemics due to poor nutrition
The Black Death

- Arrived in Italy in 1347
- Quickly spread across Europe
  - (followed the traditional trade routes)
- Disease was transmitted by fleas (living on rats)
- Over 1/3 of Europe’s population died
Many believed that the disease was caused by “bad” air
Some thought it was the wrath of God
Others blamed the Jews
The Plague Doctor
Religious radicals - the flagellants sought to appease an “angry” God through self sacrifice physical acts of penance
Macabre art reflected a profound pessimism and preoccupation with death.
IMPACT OF THE BLACK DEATH

- Labor shortages – fewer workers
- Decline in production – inflation - rise in prices
- Feudalism began to decline as new social and economic opportunities arose
- Growing Anti-Semitism – many blamed the Jews
- Pessimism and fatalism (macabre art)
The Hundred Years War 1337-1453

- Conflict between England and France over territory in France and claim to the French throne
- Introduction of Longbow ends feudalism as peasant soldiers make knights obsolete
Introduction of Longbow ends feudalism as peasant soldiers make knights obsolete. Ends monopoly of arms for nobles.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tDQffQK5T6g
Joan of Arc
THE DECLINE IN THE POWER AND PRESTIGE OF THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Babylonian Captivity (1309-1376)

- Papacy was moved to Avignon, France came under the control of the French monarchy
- Papacy was restored to Rome in 1377 by the reforming Pope Urban VI
Some argued that the Church would be best served if the pope shared authority with a “general” council – representing the Christian community.

Some went so far as to challenge the authority of the Church over the state declaring that the Church was subordinate to the state (ultimately rejected).

Disunity and infighting led to the election of three different popes – each claiming the title and each refusing to step down.
CONCILIAR MOVEMENT

- The **German Holy Roman Emperor** finally resolved the issue by organizing the **Council of Constance** which elected a new pope
  - The Council condemned and executed the Bohemian political and religious reformer, John Hus
**Early Church Reformers**  

**John Wyclif**, in England, challenged the scriptural foundations of the pope’s temporal power  
- argued that everyone should read the Bible for himself/herself  
  - **Vernacular translations of the Bible**
Wyclif- first English translation of Scripture
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4qa0sZ78uMM
JOHN HUS – BOHEMIAN (CZECH) POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS REFORMER killed in PRAGUE.
Effect of Movement

Led to greater questioning of Church authority:
- Is the pope God's representative? Is he above political leaders?

Religious Debate:
Who can interpret the Bible?
transubstantiation debate

Led Church to reform, but questioning opened-up new ideas of religion without the Holy, Roman, Catholic Church (beginnings of Protestant Reformation)
The impact of the crises of the Late Middle Ages and the rise of the Renaissance

- New economic and social opportunities-
  - decline of feudalism
- Economic growth-
  - expansion of trade and business - banking
- Growth of the middle class
- Growing interest in expanding knowledge and learning
- Greater willingness to challenge and question the power and authority of the Church
- Anti-Semitism continued