

Your Core E summer reading assignment will take you on a tour of the Middle Ages. You will read about monks, churches, popes, knights-errant, chivalry, the Black Death, the Hundred Years War, and much, much more!

My purpose for taking you on this tour is to help you develop an understanding of the worldview, the virtues, and the vices of the Middle Ages. This is a period of time in which people thought and lived very differently than we do today. Since much of what we will study this coming year – Dante's *Inferno*, the Renaissance, and the Reformation are all outgrowths of the Middle Ages, it is vitally important for you to develop an acquaintance of the culture of this age.

The two books that you will read are *How The Irish Saved Civilization* by Thomas Cahill and *A Distant Mirror* by Barbara Tuchman. In his book, Mr. Cahill tells the improbable but true story of how a group of monks in Ireland preserved most of the Classical and Christian literature that we have inherited today. In doing so, these obscure monks preserved the treasures of literacy and Western Civilization for the benefit of future generations, including ours. Mrs. Tuchman's book is about Europe in the 1300s as seen through the eyes of a French noble, Enguerrand de Coucy. De Coucy's world includes the Black Death, the Hundred Years War, the later Crusades, the Papal Schism, and the denouement of chivalry.

Your assignment is as follows:

1. Read the two books in their entirety.
2. Write a 1-2 page essay on the labors of the Irish monks chronicled in *How the Irish Saved Civilization* and the impact that these labors had on future generations
3. Write a 2-3 page essay on one of the following topics in *A Distant Mirror*. Use citations and/or quotes from the book to substantiate your conclusions.
 - a. How the Black Death changed Europe
 - b. How the Hundred Years War changed France
 - c. How the Papal Schism affected the reputation of the Church.

This is due the first day of class.

Please contact your Core E Western Thought II tutor with any questions.

Thank you,

Western Thought II Tutors