**Peasants, Trade, and Cities**

The near doubling of Europe's population, **combined with more peaceful and settled conditions**, contributed to major improvements in life in Europe. Reasons for the change included the development of labor-saving devices, improvements in farming that increased food production, and a revival of trade. Trade, in turn, contributed to the development of a money economy, the resettlement of ancient cities, and the emergence of new cities. Many people still lived as peasants. They combined agricultural and craft work to provide for their families, while turning over part of what they produced to the lord of the manor. The cities, meanwhile, were crowded, dirty places that nevertheless provided new opportunities for men and women. In the cities, guilds regulated employment in many crafts and professions.

**The Late Middle Ages**

**Bubonic plague** carried by infested rats decimated Europe’s population in the mid-1300s. The Black Death led to anti–Semitism, devastated Europe’s economy, and accelerated the end of serfdom. Church power declined as European kings rejected papal claims of supremacy. Popular respect for the papacy was undermined by the Great Schism, a nearly forty-year papal crisis during which a rival papacy was set up in France. The Hundred Years' War introduced new methods of warfare and devastated England and France. The **"new monarchies"** of the fifteenth century reestablished the centralized power of the monarchies in England, France, and Spain.