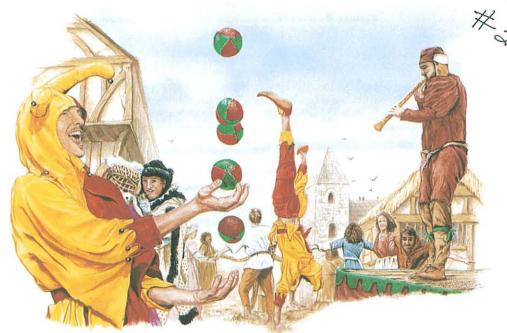
## THE MIDDLE AGES

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## **EDUCATION**

In the Middle Ages education was mainly a privilege for men destined to follow a career in the Church. Some rulers were keen to improve education. King Alfred of Wessex and the Emperor Charlemagne were among these. But not all their plans to encourage education were successful, and it was not until the thirteenth century that education was available to a wider selection of people.

Schools were found in many monasteries and cathedrals. Universities were to develop out of some of the most important of these schools. Classes were in Latin, the teachers were priests or monks, and examinations were by spoken debate. In some countries, such as Italy, schools were established that did not concentrate on religious teaching alone. Subjects like arithmetic, which was useful to those taking up a life of trade, were taught.





## **BOOKS**

The Church required books for its services. The printing press was not invented in western Europe until the fifteenth century, so all books had to be copied out by hand. The monasteries played an important role in the production of books. Monks made copies of manuscripts in part of the monastery called the "scriptorium." Here they produced Bibles and books of prayer. Many of these passed from one monastery to another, often from one country to another. Anselm of Aosta, in Italy, for example, sent copies of prayers to Gundolf, a monk of the abbey of Bec, in France. The manuscripts produced were very often "illuminated" (beautifully decorated) with pictures.

Early in the Middle Ages only members of the clergy had an education enabling them to read and write. However, by the thirteenth century, books were sometimes produced by lay people. Some of these were professional scribes, who copied out manuscripts to earn their living.

Children at school, being taught by a monk. Few schools existed at this time, and education was very rare. Books were few, so children had to share. A scene at the royal court: the king is presented with a book. Many writers dedicated their work to important nobles. The poet Chaucer knew many people at the royal court in England, and dedicated many books to them.