

## Reader's Guide

**T**he term “crusade” is commonly used today to refer to a dedicated, enthusiastic effort. It usually means a total, all-out attempt to correct a problem, such as combating drunk driving or saving an endangered species from extinction. When people use the word “crusade,” though, they may not recognize its distinctly religious meaning and history, even though they might embark on their crusade with religious enthusiasm.

The “Crusades” (with a capital “C”) were a series of military campaigns launched by the Christian countries of western Europe in the late eleventh century. During these battles tens of thousands of people went to war in the Middle East. Their goal was to recapture the Holy Land, or Palestine, from the Muslims and restore it to Christian control. The focus of the Crusaders was the holy city of Jerusalem, now part of the Jewish nation of Israel on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea and still a holy site to three religions: Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. But the impact of the Crusades was felt throughout that region of the world and in Europe.

The First Crusade was launched in late 1095 and ended with the capture of Jerusalem in 1099. The last Cru-



sade took place in the late 1200s. Historians identify seven separate Crusades, although there were two other highly irregular Crusades that are not generally numbered. The exact number is not important, for the Crusades were a single extended conflict that was fought over the course of two centuries. As the military and diplomatic situation in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas changed, successive waves of European troops flowed into the region to capture a key city or to expel an opposing army that had recaptured the same city. Each of these waves represented one of the Crusades. After each Crusade, particularly the early ones, some of the European invaders remained in the Middle East to rule over Christian kingdoms they had established. Many others returned to their homelands. During the periods between each Crusade, there was relative peace between the warring parties, although tensions simmered beneath the surface.

The Muslim world was slow to respond to the Crusaders. For many decades Muslims were too busy fighting among themselves for power and influence in the Middle East and lands beyond to recognize the threat that the Crusaders posed. Only after they mounted organized resistance were they able to drive the Crusaders out of the Middle East. Hundreds of years later, many Muslims continue to regard westerners as “crusaders” bent on occupying their holy territory.

Historians continue to debate whether, from a European Christian perspective, the Crusades were a success. While the first ended successfully with the capture of Jerusalem, some of the later Crusades were military and political disasters, at least from the point of view of the Europeans. All historians agree, though, that the Crusades would have a profound effect on the development of European civilization. They opened trade routes and promoted commerce, they led to never-before-seen exploration and cultural contact, and they provided inspiration for poets and novelists. They also laid the groundwork for conflict and religious strife that continues in the twenty-first century.

## **Features and Format**

*The Crusades: Primary Sources* offers twenty-four full or excerpted documents, speeches, and literary works from the Crusades era. Included are “political” statements, such as

Pope Urban II's speech calling for the First Crusade. There are also accounts of battles and sieges as well as other events, such as the Children's Crusade and the slaughter of Jews in Europe by Crusaders on their way to the Holy Land. Included are samplings from literature, among them, excerpts from the epic poem *The Song of Roland* and a chapter of the Koran. The Arabic view of the times is featured in such writings as a Muslim historian's view of the Mongol invasions. The Byzantine perspective is seen, for example, in a letter from the Eastern Orthodox patriarch of Antioch to the king of France and portions of *The Alexiad*, a biography of the emperor Alexius I Comnenus by his daughter.

The excerpts presented in *The Crusades: Primary Sources* are divided into four chapters. Each chapter focuses on a specific theme: Fighting the Holy Wars, Call to Arms, A Different View, and A Matter of Faith. Every chapter opens with an overview, followed by reprinted documents from the time of the Crusades.

The following additional material accompanies each excerpt (or section of excerpts):

- An **introduction** places the document and its author in a historical context.
- **Things to remember while reading** gives important background information and directs the reader to central ideas in the text.
- **What happened next...** gives an account of later historical events.
- **Did you know...** cites significant and interesting facts about the document, the author, or the events discussed.
- **Consider the following...** poses questions about the material for the reader to consider.
- **For More Information** lists sources for more information on the author, topic, or document.

*The Crusades: Primary Sources* includes numerous sidebars, highlighting interesting related information. More than forty black-and-white images illustrate the text. A glossary running alongside each primary document defines terms, people, and ideas contained in the document. The volume begins with a timeline of events and a listing of important

words to know; it concludes with a subject index of people, places, and events.

## **The Crusades Reference Library**

*The Crusades: Primary Sources* is only one component of a three-part U•X•L Crusades Reference Library. The set also includes one almanac volume and one volume of biographies:

- *The Crusades: Almanac* covers the Crusades in thirteen thematic chapters, each examining an element of the two-hundred-year time period. The volume takes the reader through many aspects of this lengthy conflict. Included are chapters on the origins, history, and aftermath of the Crusades and on the holy city of Jerusalem and the land of Palestine as the focal site of three faiths. There are also profiles of the various groups of Muslims and Christians involved in the fight and descriptions of knights and the conduct of warfare.
- *The Crusades: Biographies* presents the biographies of twenty-five men and women who lived at the time of the Crusades and experienced the battles or the effects of these wars. Profiled are famous figures, such as King Richard the Lionheart of England, the Muslim warrior Saladin, and Saint Francis of Assisi. Among the lesser-known people featured are the sultana of Egypt Shajarat al-Durr and the Arab soldier and writer Usamah ibn Munqidh.

## **Acknowledgments**

Several people deserve our gratitude for their assistance with this project. We are indebted to everyone at U•X•L and Thomson Gale who assisted with the production, particularly Julie Carnegie, who provided help at all stages; we also thank Carol Nagel for her support.

Marcia Merryman Means  
Neil Schlager

## **About the Author**

J. Sydney Jones is the author of eight books of fiction and nonfiction, all with a focus on history and travel. A former journalist, he has also penned more than a thousand

articles for newspapers, magazines, and biographical reference works. His works have been translated into French, Russian, Italian, German, and Hebrew.

### **About the Editors**

Marcia Merryman Means and Neil Schlager are managing editor and president, respectively, of Schlager Group Inc., an editorial services company with offices in Florida and Vermont. Schlager Group publications have won numerous honors, including four RUSA awards from the American Library Association, two Reference Books Bulletin/Booklist Editors' Choice awards, two New York Public Library Outstanding Reference awards, and two *CHOICE* awards.

### **Comments and Suggestions**

We welcome your comments on *The Crusades: Primary Sources* and suggestions for other topics in history to consider. Please write to Editors, *The Crusades: Primary Sources*, U•X•L, 27500 Drake Road, Farmington Hills, Michigan 48331-3535; call toll-free 800-877-4253; send faxes to 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via <http://www.galegroup.com>.