



# The Crusades: When Two Religions Clashed

**KS3** Ages 11-14 🕒 3 min read

## What Were the Crusades?

The **Crusades** were a series of religious wars fought over nearly **200 years** (roughly **1096 to 1291**). **Christian armies** from **Europe** travelled thousands of miles to fight **Muslim armies** in the **Middle East**. They were fighting to control a place called the **Holy Land** — mainly around **Jerusalem** — which is sacred to both **Christians** and **Muslims** (and also to **Jewish people**).

The word "**crusade**" comes from the cross, the symbol of Christianity. Soldiers wore crosses on their clothes to show they were fighting for their religion.

## Why Did They Happen?

In the **11th century**, **Muslim Turks** took control of **Jerusalem** from **Christian rule**. For centuries, Christian pilgrims (people making a religious journey) could visit the holy sites there safely. But when the Turks took over, they made it much harder for Christians to visit.

Think of it like if someone took over your favourite park and wouldn't let you visit your favourite spot anymore — you'd feel upset and want it back.

The Christian leader of the **Eastern Orthodox Church**, called the **Patriarch**, asked the **Pope** (the head of the **Roman Catholic Church**) for help. The Pope was very powerful and could persuade thousands of people to fight. In **1095**, he called for a crusade, and people got very excited. He promised that anyone who fought would be forgiven for their sins by God.

## Who Went and What Happened?

Hundreds of thousands of people signed up — knights, soldiers, and even ordinary people hoping for adventure or wanting to prove their faith. There were actually **nine major crusades** between **1096** and **1291**.

The crusaders had some early successes and captured Jerusalem in **1099**, but they couldn't hold onto it forever. Over time, Muslim forces pushed them back. Eventually, by **1291**, the crusaders lost their last stronghold in the Holy Land.

Think of it like two teams fighting over a trophy — one team wins it, then loses it, then fights to get it back again and again.

## **What Was the Impact?**

The Crusades were brutal and caused huge suffering. Hundreds of thousands of people died, and many innocent people on both sides were killed. While the crusaders didn't achieve their main goal of keeping the Holy Land, the wars did change history by increasing trade and cultural exchange between Europe and the Middle East.