The Great Schism

Decline of Church Power in the Middle Ages
The popes reached the height of their power in the 1200’s.

In the 1300’s, the Church’s power declined.
European kings had begun to reject papal claims to supremacy (that they had both supreme political and spiritual power).

A clash between King Philip IV and Pope Boniface VIII would result in a loss of power for the Catholic Church.
Does the King have more power or the Pope?

- King Phillip claimed the right to tax the clergy. Pope Boniface countered that this needed the consent of the Pope since the Popes were supreme beings over the King.
- King Phillip responded by arresting the Pope.
King Phillip Appoints a Frenchman as Pope

- King Phillip arranged an election to get Clement V, a Frenchman, elected as Pope.
- The Pope’s new residence was in Avignon, France.
- For the first time ever, the pope did not live in Rome.
- Many people began to resent the luxury and splendor that the Popes were living in Avignon.
When the Pope died, the next Pope moved back to Rome.
When he died, the Romans demanded that the next pope be an Italian. They elected Pope Urban VI.
The next month, French cardinals declared the election invalid and elected another French Pope, who took up residence in Avignon.
This became known as the Great Schism.
The Great Schism Divides Europe and Hurts the Catholic Church

- The Schism lasted from 1378-1417 and divided Europe.
- France and its allies supported the Pope in Avignon.
- Great Britain and its allies supported the Pope in Rome.
- The Schism damaged the Catholic Church with all of the fighting between both Popes.
- People lost their faith in the power of the Pope.
- A solution was finally proposed...
The situation became worse when an effort to resolve the problem in 1409 resulted in the simultaneous reign of THREE popes. The crisis led to a call for reform. Protests erupted all over Europe. Popes resigned, and eventually one that was acceptable to all was elected.
By the early 1400’s, the Church had lost most of its POLITICAL power.
The Pope could no longer assert his power over the state (kingdoms).

Although Christianity remained central to medieval life, the papacy and the Catholic Church had lost much of their SPIRITUAL authority, as well.