

WORLD HISTORY READERS

Level 5-6

The Story of the Reformation

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Seed
Learning



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Burning Bones

In 1428, a group of men in England were busy digging a hole in the ground. They were looking for a wooden box. Once it was found, they pulled the box out of the ground and opened it.



The burning of
Wycliffe's bones

In the box were the bones of a dead man. He had been buried in this spot 44 years ago. The men set the box and bones on fire.

When the fire finished, the men threw the ashes and burned bones into the River Swift. They wanted to make the dead man disappear from history.



Wycliffe's ashes and bones being
thrown into the River Swift

John Wycliffe

Who was this dead man? What did he do, and why is he important? The man was John Wycliffe (1330–1384). He was one of the first men to try to change religion in Europe. It was a big change called the Reformation, and people like Wycliffe were called reformers.

Six hundred years ago, the Roman Catholic Church had great power in Europe. Although Wycliffe was a leader in the Catholic Church in England, he also spoke against the Catholic Church. He thought that some changes should be made.



John Wycliffe



A Roman Catholic
Church in Florence, Italy

The Morning Star of the Reformation

During Wycliffe's time, the Roman Catholic Church worshiped in Latin even though not everyone understood it. Throughout Europe, all Christian Bibles were in Latin, too. Wycliffe, who lived in England, spoke English and Latin.

Wycliffe wanted people to be able to read the Bible in English, so he translated it. The church leaders in Rome did not like this or his teachings.

Wycliffe also wrote books that challenged the church to reform. He is often called "The Morning Star of the

Reformation." Church leaders burned Wycliffe's writings. But Wycliffe's ideas did not disappear. They influenced other reformers.



Wycliffe sharing his English Bible with other leaders



A Latin Bible

Getting Back to Roots

There were other reformers like John Wycliffe. They started to reform the church, too. During the Renaissance, thinkers looked back at the great cultures of Greece and Rome. Renaissance thinkers wanted to learn from the past. Church reformers, too, wanted to learn from their Christian roots in the years just after Jesus died. They wanted to follow the Bible, which was written between 50–100 A.D.

The early teachings were very different from those in the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman Catholic Church told its people to follow many traditions that the early church did not do, and ones not written in the Bible. The reformers didn't like these traditions.



A church window with Wycliffe in the center, surrounded by the names of other reformers



Wycliffe on trial for his ideas

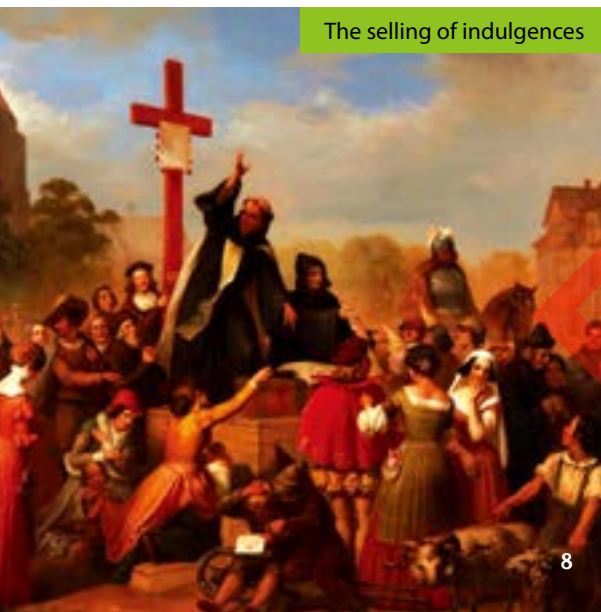
Luther and the Protestants

Another reformer who lived after Wycliff was a German called Martin Luther (1483–1546). Like Wycliffe, Luther was a leader in the Catholic Church. And he saw many problems in the church.



Martin Luther

For example, Catholics believed that God would punish them for doing bad things. But the Roman Catholic Church made a way to reduce this punishment. If a Catholic person bought an “indulgence,” the Pope said that God would forgive them or reduce the punishment.



The selling of indulgences

But this practice was not in the Bible, and it became misused. The Catholic Church sold indulgences to get money. The Catholic Church was selling God’s forgiveness.

The Ninety-Five Theses

Luther was a scholar, and he carefully studied this problem. Then he wrote a paper against the practice of selling indulgences. This paper called the “Ninety-Five Theses,” gave 95 reasons why indulgences were bad.



The door at the Wittenberg Church

On October 31, 1517, Luther sent the Ninety-Five Theses to a leader of the church in Germany. In this way, Luther intended to discuss problems in the Roman Catholic Church. His theses were not hostile. Later in November, the work was translated into German and circulated.

Today, we call the Reformation the Protestant Reformation.



And October 31, 1517, is generally considered the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.



The first page of Luther's 95 theses

Comprehension Questions

1. John Wycliffe was from...
 - (a) Germany.
 - (b) England.
 - (c) France.
 - (d) Italy.
2. Whose bones were burned 44 years after he died?
 - (a) Luther
 - (b) Calvin
 - (c) Eck
 - (d) Wycliffe
3. Catholic Church leaders were angry at Wycliffe because he...
 - (a) spoke against the church.
 - (b) was a liar.
 - (c) loved money.
 - (d) was not religious.
4. Wycliffe translated the Bible from...
 - (a) English into Latin.
 - (b) Latin into English.
 - (c) Latin into German.
 - (d) German into French.
5. Martin Luther was from...
 - (a) Germany.
 - (b) England.
 - (c) France.
 - (d) Italy.
6. Luther wrote against the selling of indulgences in his...
 - (a) Bible.
 - (b) 95 theses.
 - (c) 66 books.
 - (d) 88 reasons.
7. Which was NOT one of Luther's punishments?
 - (a) His books were burned.
 - (b) His property was taken.
 - (c) He was put to death.
 - (d) He was cut off from the church.
8. Luther translated the Bible into common...
 - (a) English.
 - (b) Latin.
 - (c) German.
 - (d) French.
9. John Calvin was French, but he lived in...
 - (a) Rome.
 - (b) Geneva.
 - (c) London.
 - (d) Wittenberg.
10. What was the main goal of the reformers?
 - (a) To criticize Catholics
 - (b) To return to their roots
 - (c) To love each other
 - (d) To make money

Glossary

- **Bible** the holy books of the Christian religion
- **castle** a large, strong building strengthened against attack, often where a king or queen lives
- **Catholic** concerning a Christian church organization based in Rome, Italy, and led by the Pope
- **hostile** not friendly; showing opposition to something
- **indulgence** the paying of money for forgiveness of a sin so you can more easily go to heaven
- **Latin** the language used by ancient Romans
- **peasant** a poor farmer
- **protest** to speak or act against something
- **Protestant** a member of one of the Christian churches that separated from the Roman Catholic Church
- **punish** to make someone suffer for doing something wrong
- **Renaissance** a time between the 14th and 17th centuries when people looked back at the teachings of the ancient Greeks and Romans
- **reject** to say no to something
- **tradition** a way of thinking or acting that is common in a culture
- **translate** to change words or ideas from one language to another

Key 1. (b) 2. (d) 3. (a) 4. (b) 5. (a) 6. (b) 7. (c) 8. (c) 9. (b) 10. (b)