Why are the Crusades Sometimes Called “Successful Failures”?
“Your brothers who live in the east are in urgent need of your help, and you must hasten to give them the aid which has often been promised them. For, as the most of you have heard, the Turks and Arabs have attacked them and have conquered the territory of Byzantium as far west as the shore of the Mediterranean [. . . ]. They have occupied more and more of the lands of those Christians, and have overcome them in seven battles. They have killed and captured many, and have destroyed the churches and devastated the empire. [. . . ] On this account I, or rather the Lord, beseech you to publish this everywhere and to persuade all people of whatever rank, foot-soldiers and knights, poor and rich, to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends.”

— Pope Urban II
“They [the Muslim Turks] have invaded the lands of those Christians and have depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire; they have led away a part of the captives into their own country, and a part they have destroyed by cruel tortures .... They circumcise the Christians, and the blood of the circumcision they either spread upon the altars or pour into the vases of the baptismal font. When they wish to torture people by a base death, they perforate their navels, and dragging forth the extremity of the intestines, bind it to a stake; then with flogging they lead the victim around until the viscera having gushed forth the victim falls prostrate upon the ground .... On whom therefore is the labor of avenging these wrongs and of recovering this territory incumbent, if not upon you?”

-- Pope Urban II
“All who die by the way, whether by land or by sea, or in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of G-d. O what a disgrace if such a despised and base race, which worships demons, should conquer a people which has the faith of omnipotent G-d! With what reproaches will the Lord overwhelm us if you do not aid those who, with us, profess the Christian religion! Let those who have been accustomed unjustly to wage private warfare against the faithful now go against the infidels and end with victory this war which should have been begun long ago. Let those who for a long time, have been robbers, now become knights. Let those who have been fighting against their brothers and relatives now fight in a proper way against the barbarians.”

— Pope Urban II
Religious Motivations

“Let the Holy Sepulchre of the Lord our Savior, which is possessed by unclean nations, especially incite you, and the holy places which are now treated with ignominy and irreverently polluted with their filthiness”

--- Pope Urban II

• Free the Holy Land and other Christian sites from the control of the “non-believing” Muslims

• Allow for easier Christian pilgrimages into the Holy Land
Political Motivations

• Help increase the Pope’s power in.
• Help heal the **Great Schism** between Western and Eastern Christianity.
• Increase Europe’s influence in the.
• End feuding between the various lords in Christian Europe.
Personal Motivations

• A chance for adventure and honor
• Debtors are freed from their debts by going on the Crusades
• All sins are forgiven, and death in the Crusades guarantees salvation
• Chance to find fortune and get land
Crusaders raiding on their way to Jerusalem
“Some of our men cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one's way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the temple of Solomon, a place where religious services were ordinarily chanted. What happened there? If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much at least, that in the temple and portico of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins.”

--- Raymond of Agiles 1099
Negative Results of Crusades

• Military victory in the First Crusade, but losses in the following efforts.
• Eastern and Western Christianity are permanently divided.
• Attacks on Jews in France and Germany.
Positive Results of the Crusades

- Increased trade within Europe.
- Increased trade with the Islamic world and Asia.
- “New” old knowledge [Greek and Roman philosophy] coming into Europe.
“The Crusades form one of the maddest episodes in history. Christianity hurled itself at [Islam] in expedition after expedition for nearly three centuries, until failure brought [failure . . . ]. Europe was drained of men and money, and threatened with social bankruptcy, if not with annihilation. Millions perished in battle, hunger, or disease; and every atrocity the imagination can conceive disgraced the warriors of the Cross. But there is a law of compensation in nature; good often comes of evil; and the Crusades broke up the night of the Dark Ages.”

-- G.W. Foote & J.M. Wheeler The Crusades In The Crimes of Christianity, 1887