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Sommario/riassunto	<p>Between the Fall of Rome and the Renaissance were the Middle Ages. Once seen as a thousand years of warfare, religious infighting, and cultural stagnation, they are now understood to be the vital connection between the past and the present. Along with the battles that helped shape the modern world are a rich heritage of architecture, arts, and literature, of empire and its dissolution. It was the era of the Crusades and the Norman Conquest, the Black Death and the fall of Constantinople. It is a landscape both familiar and foreign, dark and foreboding at times, but also filled with the promise and potential of the future.</p>