The Sale of Indulgences

In the Roman Catholic Church, sins are forgiven by the sacrament of penance. Spiritual absolution is bestowed upon the confessor if he or she shows repentance. In the medieval and early Renaissance period, true repentance was shown by a willingness to carry out good works with personal sacrifice.

At first, being granted an indulgence simply released the person from the obligation of doing good works. Soon, however, the Church conceived the idea of selling indulgences, which was a huge source of revenue. Ultimately, people could buy indulgences that assured them a straight passage to heaven. Many prominent thinkers opposed this practice before Luther did.

1. What was the Catholic view of true repentance?
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2. Why was the sale of indulgences important to the Catholic Church? How did people benefit?
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3. How did Church reformers spread their ideas? (Page 458)
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4. Apparently what was the purpose of the “Ninety-five Theses”? (Page 459)
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5. What does the apprentice think about the Ninety-five Theses? (Page 459)
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6. How do the other apprentices react to the Ninety-five Theses? (Page 459)
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7. Why does the apprentice have a wave of fear? (Page 459)
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8. Why do the older printers agree with the Ninety-five Theses? (Page 459)
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Chapter 14 Starting with a Story – “Printing Challenging Ideas”

Read pages 458 and 459 and answer the following questions.