The 7th century

The low point.

Europe's population, towns and book production were near their lowest after Rome. Irish and English monks kept learning alive and carried it back to the continent.

What rose

597–664. Augustine's mission to Kent; the Synod of Whitby. Source: Gregorian mission

c. 625. The Sutton Hoo ship burial. Source: Sutton Hoo

7th c.. Irish monks found monasteries across Europe, from Luxeuil to Bobbio. Source: Hiberno-Scottish mission

What fell or stalled

The Arab conquests took Syria, Egypt and North Africa from the Roman world. Source: Early Muslim conquests

Western Europe produced only about 120 books a year. Source: Buringh and van Zanden (2009)

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