

Charlemagne



Describe Charlemagne's Army:

The Pope and Lombards:



Charlemagne and the Saxons:



Charlemagne and Spain:

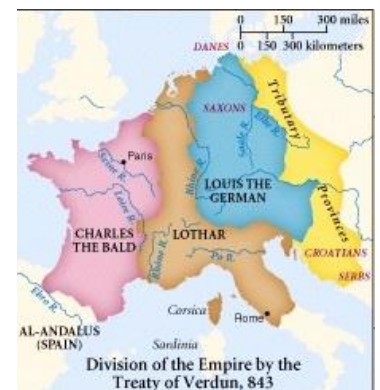
What happened on Christmas day, 800?



Charlemagne and Education:

Abul-Abbas:

What happened to Charlemagne's Empire after he died?



Charlemagne



We know a lot about Charlemagne because the King's personal secretary and advisor, Einhard, made a lot of notes. He wrote The Life of Charlemagne. Because of this, we know a lot about him, though some accounts might be exaggerated.

According to Einhard, Charlemagne was very tall 6'4 when the average man was less than 5'6!

Describe Charlemagne's Army: Charlemagne had an elite group of horsemen whom he called paladins. He had well equipped foot soldiers. They were well trained and Charlemagne was known for planning out his campaigns carefully.

The Pope and Lombards: In 773 Pope Adrian I was threatened by invaders, the Lombards. He sent a message to Charlemagne asking for help.

Charlemagne marched his army across the Alps and defeated the invaders. In the 1493 painting to the right, the pope asks Charlemagne for help at a meeting near Rome.



Charlemagne and the Saxons: The Saxons were Germanic tribesmen. Their name comes from the sax, a single-edged knife that each warrior carried as a tool and weapon. Earlier, many Saxons had migrated to Britain, but many Saxons still lived on the Continent. They resisted being incorporated into the Frankish kingdom and resisted becoming Christians. Charlemagne carried out many campaigns against the Saxons between 772 and 804. The Saxons were continually raiding towns and monasteries in the Frankish territory. For example, in 772 when the Saxons burned a Christian church Charlemagne launched a massive attack, forcing the Saxons to surrender. He ordered his men to destroy the Irminsul, a huge tree trunk that was central to the Saxon religion (they believed that it held up the roof of the world). The picture to the right is a 1882 picture entitled "The destruction of Irminsul by Charlemagne" After many of their defeats, the Saxons promised to convert to Christianity and vow loyalty to the king only to go back on that promise when Charlemagne was distracted by other matters.



Charlemagne and Spain: Charlemagne launched attacks against the Muslims in Spain in 778. Although he managed to win a small region (known as the Spanish March), overall he wasn't very successful. Most of his successes came at a great cost. In a minor incident, part of his army was wiped out at a mountain pass in the Pyrenees Mountains. This event inspired the medieval tale, The Song of Roland.

What happened on Christmas day, 800? While Charlemagne was worshipping at St. Peter's Cathedral, the Pope descended from the altar and placed a jeweled crown on Charlemagne's head. He was hailed as the Frankish King, Charles Augustus, Emperor of the Romans.



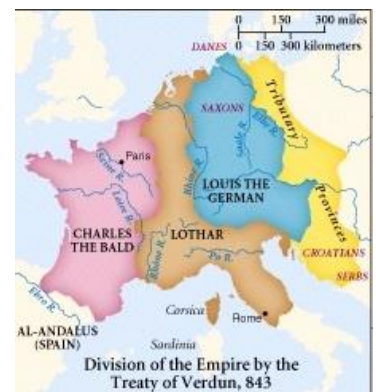
Charlemagne later claimed he would not have attended church if he had known what the Pope had intended. He was annoyed that his title was a gift from the Pope. This title also caused friction with the rulers of the Byzantine Empire, who considered themselves to be the true heirs to the Roman Empire.

Charlemagne and Education: Charlemagne enticed many scholars to come to his court by offering huge rewards and support to scholars who came to his court. He established a school at the palace for training government officials.

Abul-Abbas: Charlemagne established diplomatic relations with the Caliph of Baghdad. He hoped to end hostilities (Muslims were making attacks on Christian monasteries in the Holy Land). His negotiations led to peace for many years. In 802, the Caliph sent Charlemagne an Asian elephant named Abul Abbas) as a gift. Charlemagne often took him along on expeditions. He lived for 8 years.

What happened to Charlemagne's Empire after he died?

Charlemagne died Jan. 28, 814 after complications from a winter cold. He was 72. Charlemagne's empire was so large and unwieldy that it did not survive intact for very long. His empire was divided among his three sons, but two of his three sons died within a year of one another. The surviving son, Louis, was a feeble ruler. When Louis died, the empire was left to his eldest son Lothair. Lothair's brothers demanded they be given parts of the empire to rule, so the empire was divided into three by the Treaty of Verdun.



Europe in the 5th century:



Image Credit: Wikipedia



Map from: <http://www.usna.edu/Users/history/abels/hh381/syllabusfall11.htm>

Charlemagne's Empire and Campaigns (from N. Hooper and M. Bennett, Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare: The Middle Ages)



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