

## **An Amazingly Cool Charlemagne Project**

Mr. Kersey

**Objective:** This project is intended to help you become more familiar with the life and achievements of Charlemagne. Complete each part of the project below as directed.

**Part I** Read “The Life and Times of Charlemagne” Handout. You may need a dictionary to help you.

**Part II** Answer Reading Questions for a Quiz Grade. You must do this by yourself. This portion of the project must be completed by the end of class on \_\_\_\_\_.

**Part III** Choose and complete *ONE* of the following projects below for a Test Grade. This part is due: \_\_\_\_\_.

**Option A:** Create a poster-sized timeline on the life and accomplishments of Charlemagne. Timelines should be colorful, detailed, and should include at least two pictures or images. You must include at least 8 dates with events from the reading. You may use poster board or paper.

**Option B:** Imagine Charlemagne is trying to raise money for the Holy Roman Empire. Create a poster advertising a visit by Charlemagne to Immaculate Conception School for a promotional fundraiser. Posters should include some pictures as well as some of Charlemagne’s accomplishments. Don’t forget to mention what he will be speaking about. You must also include one flyer that would be handed out at the fundraiser. Remember this is an ad, so it should be bold and attractive.

**Option C:** Imagine that you are Charlemagne’s best friend. Write a eulogy that would be delivered at the funeral of Charlemagne. It should be one full page typed and should include some of his most important accomplishments, as well as a description of Charlemagne’s best qualities. This must be single spaced. Size 12 Times New Roman font, with 1 inch margins on top & bottom and on the sides.

**Option D:** Complete a Power Point presentation on the life of Charlemagne including his accomplishments and important life events. Your presentation must contain at least 8 dates with events from the reading. Remember to include pictures, images, and to make your presentation attractive.

**Option E:** Create a poster-sized map of Western Europe identifying major battles and events during Charlemagne’s rule and the boundaries of his empire. Include all the parts of a good map (scale, compass, key, title) Be sure to include the following places on the map; Aachen, Rome, Verden. Map must be drawn by hand, not printed from the computer.

**Rubric** - Projects will be graded on the following criteria:

Neatness – Your project demonstrates effort and planning. It is not sloppy. (10 points)

Content – All required content is included in your project. It is detailed and accurate. (10 points)

Creativity – Your project demonstrates thought and creativity. Do your best. (10 points)

Accuracy/ spelling - Your project is free from historical errors, as well as spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes. (10 points)

Part III applies to the *History* and *Skill & Methods* Standards and is worth 40 points for each standard.

## **The Life and Times of Charlemagne**

"By the sword and the cross," Charlemagne (Charles the Great) became master of Western Europe. It was falling into decay when Charlemagne became joint king of the Franks in 768. Except in the monasteries, people had all but forgotten education and the arts. Boldly Charlemagne conquered barbarians and kings alike. By restoring the roots of learning and order, he preserved many political rights and revived culture.

Charlemagne's grandfather was Charles Martel, the warrior who crushed the Saracens. Charlemagne was the elder son of Bertrade ("Bertha Greatfoot") and Pepin (or Pippin) the Short, first "mayor of the palace" to become king of the Franks. Although schools had almost disappeared in the 8th century, historians believe that Bertrade gave young Charles some education and that he learned to read. His devotion to the church became the great driving force of his remarkable life.

Charlemagne was tall, powerful, and tireless. His secretary, Eginhard, wrote that Charlemagne had fair hair and a "face laughing and merry . . . his appearance was always stately and dignified." He had a ready wit, but could be stern. His tastes were simple and moderate. He delighted in hunting, riding, and swimming. He wore the Frankish dress: linen shirt and breeches, a silk-fringed tunic, hose wrapped with bands, and, in winter, a tight coat of otter or marten skins. Over all these garments "he flung a blue cloak, and he always had a sword girt about him."

Charlemagne's character was contradictory. In an age when the usual penalty for defeat was death, Charlemagne several times spared the lives of his defeated foes; yet in 782 at Verden, after a Saxon uprising, he ordered 4,500 Saxons beheaded. He compelled the clergy and nobles to reform, but he divorced two of his four wives without any cause. He forced kings and princes to kneel at his feet, yet his mother and his two favorite wives often overruled him in his own household.

### **Charlemagne Begins His Reign**

In 768, when Charlemagne was 26, he and his brother Carloman inherited the kingdom of the Franks. In 771 Carloman died, and Charlemagne became sole ruler of the kingdom. At that time the northern half of Europe was still pagan and lawless. In the south, the Roman Catholic church was striving to assert its power against the Lombard kingdom in Italy. In Charlemagne's own realm, the Franks were falling back into barbarian ways, neglecting their education and religion.

Charlemagne was determined to strengthen his realm and to bring order to Europe. In 772 he launched a 30-year campaign that conquered and Christianized the powerful pagan Saxons in the north. He subdued the Avars, a huge Tatar tribe on the Danube. He compelled the rebellious Bavarian dukes to submit to him. When possible he preferred to settle matters peacefully, however. For example, Charlemagne offered to pay the Lombard king Desiderius for return of lands to the pope, but, when Desiderius refused, Charlemagne seized his kingdom in 773 to 774 and restored the Papal States.

The key to Charlemagne's amazing conquests was his ability to organize. During his reign he sent out more than 50 military expeditions. He rode as commander at the head of at least half of them. He moved his armies over

wide reaches of country with unbelievable speed, but every move was planned in advance. Before a campaign he told the counts, princes, and bishops throughout his realm how many men they should bring, what arms they were to carry, and even what to load in the supply wagons. These feats of organization and the swift marches later led Napoleon to study his tactics.

One of Charlemagne's minor campaigns has become the most famous. In 778 he led his army into Spain to battle the infidel Saracens. On its return, Basques ambushed the rear guard at Roncesvalles, in northern Spain, and killed "Count Roland." Roland became a great hero of medieval songs and romances.

By 800 Charlemagne was the undisputed ruler of Western Europe. His vast realm covered what are now France, Switzerland, Belgium, and The Netherlands. It included half of present-day Italy and Germany, part of Austria, and the Spanish March ("border"). The broad March reached to the Ebro River. By thus establishing a central government over Western Europe, Charlemagne restored much of the unity of the old Roman Empire and paved the way for the development of modern Europe.

### **Crowned Emperor**

On Christmas Day in 800, while Charlemagne knelt in prayer in Saint Peter's in Rome, Pope Leo III seized a golden crown from the altar and placed it on the bowed head of the king. The throng in the church shouted, "To Charles the August, crowned by God, great and pacific emperor, long life and victory!"

Charlemagne is said to have been surprised by the coronation, declaring that he would not have come into the church had he known the pope's plan. However, some historians say the pope would not have dared to act without Charlemagne's knowledge.

The coronation was the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire. Though Charlemagne did not use the title, he is considered the first Holy Roman emperor.

### **Reform and Renaissance**

Charlemagne had deep sympathy for the peasants and believed that government should be for the benefit of the governed. When he came to the throne, various local governors, called "counts," had become lax and oppressive. To reform them, he expanded the work of investigators, called *missi dominici*. He prescribed their duties in documents called capitularies and sent them out in teams of two - a churchman and a noble. They rode to all parts of the realm, inspecting government, administering justice, and reawakening all citizens to their civil and religious duties.

Twice a year Charlemagne summoned the chief men of the empire to discuss its affairs. In all problems he was the final arbiter, even in church issues, and he largely unified church and state.

Charlemagne was a tireless reformer who tried to improve his people's lot in many ways. He set up money standards to encourage commerce, tried to build a Rhine-Danube canal, and urged better farming methods. He especially worked to spread education and Christianity in every class of people.

He revived the Palace School at Aachen, his capital. He set up other schools, opening them to peasant boys as well as nobles.

Charlemagne never stopped studying. He brought an English monk, Alcuin, and other scholars to his court. He learned to read Latin and some Greek but apparently did not master writing. At meals, instead of having jesters perform, he listened to men reading from learned works.

To revive church music, Charlemagne had monks sent from Rome to train his Frankish singers. To restore some appreciation of art, he brought valuable pieces from Italy. An impressive monument to his religious devotion is the cathedral at Aachen, which he built and where he was buried (see Aachen).

At Charlemagne's death in 814 only one of his three sons, Louis, was living. Louis's weak rule brought on the rise of civil wars and revolts. After his death his three quarreling sons split the empire between them by the Partition of Verdun in 843.

*Source: "The Historical Charlemagne (742?-814)" 1991. Compton's Learning Company.*

*<http://www.humnet.ucla.edu/santiago/histchrl.htm>. This article was used without any permission whatsoever, but hopefully no one will mind because it is only for my students.*

## The Historical Charlemagne Reading Quiz

Mr. Kersey

Name:

Date:

Class:

**Directions:** Answer the following questions as indicated. You will not need complete sentences for many of them.

1. Who was Charlemagne's brother? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Define the word "pagan."
3. List all the groups of people Charlemagne defeated, conquered or subdued. Just list. Really.
4. When was Charlemagne born? \_\_\_\_\_
5. List the responsibilities of the *Missi Dominici*.
6. Define "arbitrator."
7. What was one way in which Charlemagne tried to help the people he ruled?

8. Define "constituents."

9. Who made up the king's court of administrative nobles and clergymen?

10. Define "pacific." (No, not the ocean).

11. When did Charlemagne die? \_\_\_\_\_

12. Make a family tree for Charlemagne. Include all the people from this reading who are related to him. You may use an additional sheet of loose leaf paper if you need it.

**Rubric:** This quiz applies to the *History and Skills and Methods Standards*. Each question is worth one point.