

# Charlemagne

# &

# facebook?

Creating a “profile” for this legendary king!



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### **Instructions:**

**1.) Your students may wonder how Charlemagne and Facebook are going to come together, but I have found this activity to be a great hit among my students!**

**2.) First, this activity can be done without any background knowledge. If you prefer to front-load a little that would be fine. I do recommend reading the first article, “Charlemagne and the Franks” together as a class.**

**3.) Hand out all four papers to each student (or even to groups if you choose to group students).**

**4.) Instruct students that they are to create a “facebook profile” for the Frankish King Charlemagne! Everything from their date of birth, achievements, and “likes” should be included in the profile! How do we know what we like? By examining the resources provided! A textbook is also a good accompanying resource!**

**5.) Students typically get a kick out of creating the Charlemagne’s “wall.” In facebook the “wall” is a place for all of your “friends” to write about something. If you see parts of the wall indented, that means someone has commented on something that someone else has already posted. You probably know how this works (if you don’t, I guarantee your kids will!)**

**6.) For the wall, have students transcend time to use people to “post.” For example, neither Charles Martel nor Clovis were alive when Charlemagne was living, however they can post on his wall if they’d like. Encourage students to think of clever yet historically accurate things to say!**

# facebook

Wall

Info

Photos

Attach:



Share

## Information:

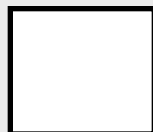
Date of Birth:

Current Location:

Works For:

## Friends:

## Likes:



# Charlemagne and the Franks

In 486, a warrior named Clovis defeated the Romans and established a kingdom centered in Paris. Clovis was a Frank, one of the many Germanic tribes that lived in Western Europe in the fifth century. Clovis worshipped pagan gods, in fact, his people believed Clovis to be the descendent of Wotan, the most powerful of the Frankish gods. In 496, Clovis and his soldiers fought another Germanic tribe. As the battle turned against Clovis, the Frankish king vowed to devote his life to Christianity if the Franks won the battle. After their unlikely victory, Clovis and 3000 of his soldiers were baptized by a Catholic bishop. Clovis and his soldiers established the power of the Franks and Christianity throughout their realm.

Islamic warriors crossed the Pyrenees Mountains in 732 and attempted to conquer the Franks. A Frankish general named Charles Martel defeated the Muslim army. This victory is considered the beginning of the reconquista. The reconquista was the Christian reconquest of Europe after the invasion of the Moors.

Charlemagne, a name that means Charles the Great, was Charles Martel's grandson and the greatest of the Frankish kings. In an era when most men were little more than five feet tall, Charlemagne stood six feet, four inches. Charlemagne expanded the kingdom of the Franks into Spain and Central Europe. Although Charlemagne never learned to read or write, he wanted to recapture the glory of the Roman Empire. The Frankish king set up schools throughout his empire and provided funds that allowed monks to copy the works of Greek and Roman authors.

Charlemagne's goal was to unite all of the Germanic tribes into a single Christian kingdom. In 799, Charlemagne's armies rescued Pope Leo III from an attack. On Christmas Day, 800, the pope repaid the king for his assistance. As Charlemagne rose from prayer, Leo placed a crown on Charlemagne's head and proclaimed him "Augustus," emperor of the "Holy Roman Empire." The coronation united Christendom under Charlemagne's rule, but it also troubled the newly crowned emperor. Charlemagne was not prepared for his coronation and may not have wanted to be crowned by the Pope. If the Pope had the power to crown Charlemagne king, the Pope might also have the right to remove the crown. When Charlemagne named his son as his successor, he presided over the ceremony himself and did not invite the Pope. Many years later, as Napoleon was about to be crowned Emperor of France in 1804, he took the crown from Pope Pius VII and set it on his head himself.

Charlemagne's empire crumbled soon after his death, and the promise of returning the glory of Rome to Western Europe soon faded. The term Holy Roman Empire would be used to describe different Frankish and German lands for another ten centuries, but the empire never attained Charlemagne's promise of uniting Christendom into one kingdom. In 1806, Napoleon prepared to oust Francis II from his title as Holy Roman Emperor, so Francis renounced his title and decreed himself emperor of Austria. The Holy Roman Empire then ceased to exist after having been a part of Europe for more than a millennium.

# Charlemagne: Great Emperor of Europe

Charlemagne was a great European leader in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century and early 9<sup>th</sup> century.

He was born April 2, 742 AD, in Northern Europe. Charlemagne was the son of Pepin the Short, who became king of the Franks. Charlemagne was a very tall man, especially for his time. He was 6'4" tall. He accompanied the Frankish army to defend the Pope against the Lombards, and also fought in other battles. From these experiences, he learned that strong leadership on and off the battlefield was important.

In 768 when Charlemagne was 26 years old, his father, Pepin, died. Charlemagne and Carloman, his brother, had to share leadership of the Franks.

Three years later, Carloman died which meant that Charlemagne would rule the Franks alone. Charlemagne wished to expand and strengthen the Frankish empire, so he launched several campaigns against the Saxons in Northern Europe; the Lombards in Italy; the Slavs and Avars in what are now Austria, Hungary, Croatia, and Slovenia; and the Moors of Northern Spain. He successfully conquered all of these groups and brought them under his rule.

In 799, Charlemagne helped Pope Leo III squash a rebellion. As a result, Pope Leo III crowned and anointed Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans.

As Emperor, Charlemagne improved the way the people were ruled. He also improved the economy by standardizing weights and measures. He minted a silver coin to be used throughout the empire, and he standardized tolls and customs fees so that everyone paid the same price for the certain goods or services. These changes improved business. Charlemagne also made legal improvements. He had laws organized and made some laws into statutes for the empire. He urged better methods of farming, promoted education, and spread Christianity.

Charlemagne, the great Emperor of the Western Roman Empire died in 814 at the age of 72. He was buried in his capital, Aachen, which is in modern day Germany.

# Charlemagne's Greatness

## Trial by Jury, not Ordeal!

**Under the Frankish Empire, the court system was famous for its time. For one one thing, a consistent court system existed.**

**When Charlemagne came to power as king of the Frankish Empire, he agreed that the court system was consistent, but he believed it was consistently unfair. In the Frankish court system, trial was by ordeal.**

**If you were a peasant and you were accused of a crime, to prove your innocence, you had to hold a red hot metal poker until your hand was deeply burned. If your burnt hand healed in three days, which it was unlikely to do, you were found innocent. If it did not, you were guilty.**

**If you were a noble, you could prove your innocence in ordeal by fight. You could hire someone to fight for you. If the person you hired lived, you were found innocent. If the person you hired died, you were found guilty, but you had paid your punishment - you had paid with "your" life, so to speak, or at least the life of the person you had hired - thus, you were free to go.**

**Charlemagne did not think much of this system of justice. He started a new system - trial by panel.**

**Under Charlemagne's system, each accused person would be heard by a panel of honorable men, men who had taken an oath to listen and to judge fairly based on the evidence presented. There was still corruption, but this system had a much better chance of being fair than did the old one.**

**Our modern jury system, trial by jury, slowly developed from this early start.**

## Education and Preservation

**Education:** After the fall of Rome in 476 CE, the ability to read and write began to disappear. Soon, the only people left with these skills were the clergy, and not even all of them had these abilities.

To effectively rule his kingdom, and to successfully convert people to Christianity, Charlemagne wanted his officials to be able to read and write. If he sent them a note, giving them some instruction, he wanted to make sure they could read it.

To accomplish this, he turned his own palace into a center for learning. Scholars came from all over Europe to teach in the palace school.

Charlemagne knew how to read, but he did not know how to write. He attempted to learn, but his hands were too scared from battle to write legibly. Charlemagne tried to talk other nobles into joining him in his educational pursuits, but they were quite resistant. It was not the Frankish way. The Frankish nobles thought reading and writing was a waste of time. They were warriors.

**Preservation:** Charlemagne gave many of his scholars the job of copying all the old manuscripts into Latin by hand. This preserved much knowledge. All books in the middle ages were written by hand. All books were written to glorify religion. Each page was beautifully designed. Some pages were "illuminated" with a cover of gold.

These books are known as illuminated manuscripts. The art of illuminating manuscripts continued for many hundreds of years.