The Age of Charlemagne

Synopsis
The 8th century was a significant era in Europe’s Middle Ages. During this time the Roman Empire and Christianity united together and expanded their influence through an alliance between the papacy in Rome and the commanding Frankish leader, Charlemagne. Charlemagne led campaigns extending the boundaries of the empire and spreading the fundamentals of Christian faith and the value and importance of education. He established schools in all monasteries in his empire. This program portrays a period of enlightenment in Medieval Europe through the unification of peoples under a strong and charismatic ruler, emphasis on education, Roman culture and Christianity, and the technological advancements that improved farming productivity during the Middle Ages.

Questions to ask before viewing
1. Describe the divisions of Germanic peoples in Europe prior to unification under Charles Martel.
2. Discuss the early foundations and influences of Christianity in Europe.

Questions to ask after viewing
1. When did Charlemagne live? (He was born in 742 AD and died in 814 AD.)
2. Who were Charlemagne’s prominent ancestors? (His grandfather was Charles Martel and his father was Pepin the Short.)
3. When was Charlemagne crowned emperor, and by whom? (on Christmas Day, 800 AD, by Pope Leo III.)
4. What was Charlemagne’s title? (He was the first Holy Roman Emperor.)
5. What was the name of the dynasty ruled by Charlemagne? (The Carolingian Dynasty.)
6. What were some of the major changes Charlemagne instituted in the empire? (He developed a legal code, established schools modeled after Roman education, encouraged education in monasteries, and campaigned for Europeans to convert to Christianity.)
7. The Holy Roman Empire during Charlemagne’s rule consisted mainly of which two modern day countries? (France and Germany)
8. What was the population of the Holy Roman Empire? (about 20 million people)
9. What was Charlemagne’s vision for his empire? (To restore the old Roman ideals, cultures, laws and education.)
10. Who usually arranged marriages? Who chose Charlemagne’s wife? (Parents usually arranged marriages; Charlemagne chose his wife himself.)
11. What is the broad definition of “the church” as it applies to the Middle Ages? (general European (and Christian) society)
12. What was the role of the monastery? (Its role was to provide religious and general education, maintain records and libraries, serve as a location for business and religious events and provide protection and health services for local peasants.)
13. What types of jobs did medieval women have? (They performed household duties such as cooking, sewing, weaving and also served as midwives, apothecaries, blacksmiths, and impromptu soldiers.)
14. Who were the prominent invaders in the 8th and 9th centuries? (The Vikings in Scandinavia; also called the Norsemen or Normans, some eventually settled in present day Normandy in France.)
15. What were the divisions in Europe and the Middle Ages in the 9th century? (the Latin or Roman West, the Byzantine East and Islam)
16. Describe peasant life in Medieval Europe. (Discussions may vary and may include: peasants wore a single layer of linen clothing until it wore out, and some wool garments in the winter. To ensure protection from invaders they pledged themselves to the local lords, paid heavy taxes and worked the lord’s land. They were permitted to farm their own land in their “spare time” and sometimes had a yield large enough to feed their family and sell at a local market.)

17. What technological advances made farming more productive? (Farmers introduced crop rotation and made use of deep-digging plows, began using horses and other animals as a source of power. Water powered millstones came into use for grinding grain.)

Annotation

This program presents a period of enlightenment for Medieval Europe through the unification of peoples under a strong and charismatic ruler, emphasis on education, Roman culture and Christianity, and technological advancements that improved farming productivity during the Middle Ages.

Length
24 Minutes

Subject Areas
Social Science, World History

Audience Level
Grades 8-12

Catalog Number
2900-EN-VID

Related titles in the AIMS collection
#2904-EN-VID: The Age of Constantine and the Germanic Invasions
#8030-EN-VID: Builders of an Empire
#8126-EN-VID: The German Way of Life
#8483-EN-VID: Shifting Sands: A History of the Middle East (School Version)
#8709-EN-VID: Discovering the Music of the Middle Ages
#4184-EN-VID: Medieval Life: The Monastery

Discussion Guide

The Age of Charlemagne

Objectives

• To present Charlemagne as an imposing monarch and educator and enlightener of the people
• To examine the unification and expanse of the empire through conquest, religious conversion and alliance with the papacy
• To identify the foundations of feudalism in medieval Europe