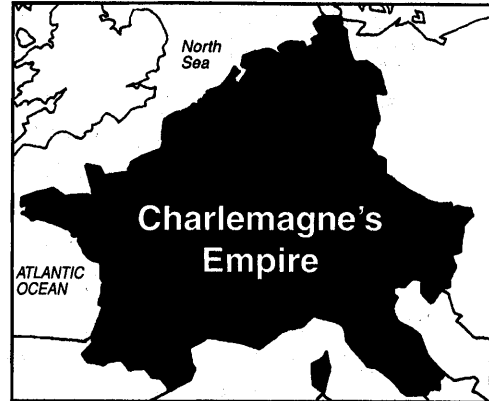


# Charlemagne

One of the Germanic tribes that overran the Roman Empire in the fifth century was the Franks. They seized control of the Roman province of Gaul. Part of this area eventually became France.

In the eighth century, a Frankish ruler named Charlemagne (also called Charles the Great) established an empire that included most of Western Europe. Within its borders lay what are now France, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, as well as parts of present-day Spain and Italy. Under Charlemagne's rule, much of Europe was united for the first time in four hundred years. Although it only lasted forty-six years, Charlemagne's empire brought some stability to a troubled continent.



Despite the fact that Charlemagne himself never learned to write, he encouraged education by establishing schools throughout his empire. He started a palace school at court and invited the leading scholars of the day to teach there. A devout Christian, he also spread Christianity among the groups he conquered. Charlemagne's method of converting the Saxons and other tribes was to present them with a simple choice: they could accept the Christian faith or be killed. Under the circumstances, many agreed to accept Christianity.

After Charlemagne's death in 814, his empire fell apart. Once again, Europe was weak and open to invasion. This time, the invaders were the Northmen or Vikings, who streamed down from Scandinavia and terrorized the people living in the area that once made up Charlemagne's empire. It was because of the cruelty of the Vikings that feudalism became fully developed in Europe.

*Determine whether each statement below is true or false. Write T or F in the blanks.*

1. \_\_\_\_ Charlemagne's empire included all of Western Europe.
2. \_\_\_\_ Present-day France grew out of what was once part of the Roman province of Gaul.
3. \_\_\_\_ Charlemagne's empire lasted over 400 years.
4. \_\_\_\_ In addition to being a powerful ruler, Charlemagne was a well-educated scholar.
5. \_\_\_\_ Charlemagne forced pagan people to convert to Christianity.
6. \_\_\_\_ The Vikings were fierce invaders from Scandinavia.
7. On Christmas Day in the year 800, Pope Leo III, head of the Roman Catholic Church, crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Romans (although Charlemagne ruled over Germans and other peoples as well). Why do you think such support and recognition was given to the Frankish ruler?