IN THIS UNIT we will study the Carolingian kings and the brief reprieve from the Dark Ages that Charlemagne’s reign brought to Western Europe. Historian Edward Gibbon said, “Of all the ‘Greats’ throughout history, no man was deserving of the title as much as Charlemagne.” Charlemagne united the old Western Roman Empire and briefly restored it to its former glory.

The Coronation of Charlemagne, by Raphael

Reading and Assignments

Based on your student’s age and ability, the reading in this unit may be read aloud to the student and journaling and notebook pages may be completed orally. Likewise, other assignments can be done with an appropriate combination of independent and guided study.

In this unit, students will:
Complete three lessons in which they will learn about the Carolingian kings.

Students will explore the following websites to learn more about Charlemagne and his life:
- [http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/medieval/history/earlymiddle/charlemagne.htm](http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/medieval/history/earlymiddle/charlemagne.htm)
- [http://www.mrdowling.com/703-charlemagne.html](http://www.mrdowling.com/703-charlemagne.html)

Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

**Leading Ideas**

An individual’s character will be reflected in his leadership.

*For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.*

— Proverbs 23:7 (KJV)

There is power in the spoken word to do evil or to do good.

*Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.*

— Matthew 12:34

The rise and fall of nations and leaders is determined by God.

*The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.*

— Proverbs 21:1

God’s Word is the supreme source of God’s revelation to man.

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.*

— 2 Timothy 3:16-17

**Key People, Places, and Events**

Pepin of Herstal
Charles Martel
Pepin the Younger
Charlemagne
Roland

19th century sculpture of Charles Martel at the Palace of Versailles
Lesson One

History Overview and Assignments
Charles Martel and Pepin the Short

BEFORE WE can begin studying the reign of Charlemagne, we must understand a bit about his ancestors. His great-grandfather was called Pepin the Elder, his grandfather was called “Charles the Hammer,” and his father was called Pepin the Short. These brave men paved the way for Charlemagne to unite Western Europe.

Key People, Places, and Events
Pepin of Herstal
Charles Martel
Pepin the Younger

Vocabulary
convent
influence

Reading and Assignments
- Read the article: Charles Martel and Pepin the Short / The Defeat of the Saracens, the Rise of the Carolingians, and the Donation of Pepin.
- After reading the article, summarize the story you read by either:
  - Retelling it out loud to your teacher or parent.
  OR
  - Completing an appropriate notebook page.
 Either way, be sure to include the answers to the discussion questions and an overview of key people, places, dates, and events in your summary.
- Start a family tree beginning with Charles Martel. Highlight the national leader in each generation.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Muslim troops leaving Narbonne to Pépin “le Bref” (“Pepin the Short”) in 759, after 40 years of occupation
Discussion Questions

1. Why were the kings called “do-nothings”?
2. Who really ruled the land?
3. Why was Charles nicknamed “Charles the Hammer”?
4. Who was the first Carolingian King of the Franks?
5. What did being crowned by a pope show?
6. What did Pepin donate to the Church?

Famous Men of the Middle Ages
by John Henry Haaren

Charles Martel and Pepin the Short
and from the book:

The Story of Europe
by Henrietta Elizabeth Marshall

The Defeat of the Saracens, the Rise of the Carolingians, and the Donation of Pepin

Mohammed’s followers, called Saracens, became warriors after his death. They fought with many countries. They also spread the Muslim religion, called Islam. The Saracens created a strong kingdom in Spain in the year 711. This kingdom lasted about seven hundred years. They hoped to beat the Franks next. Last, they wanted to rule all of Europe.

The Saracens thought the Franks would be easy to fight. The King of the Franks was a weak man. There were many weak kings during this time. They were called “do-nothings.” These kings did not care about ruling their people. They only cared about having fun. They ruled from about 638 to 751. The people who did their work were called “mayors of the palace.”

Mayors of the Palace
At first, the mayors of the palace just managed the King’s home. Sometimes they took care of kings who were very young. They made decisions for the King until he was older. During this time, many young kings did not want to make decisions for their countries. They just wanted to play. So, the mayors kept on ruling the kingdom. Eventually they did all the King’s business for him and did not ask him about any decisions.

Pepin the Elder
One famous mayor was named Pepin of Herstal, later called Pepin “the Elder.” He put the King in a fancy parade once a year. The King wore special clothes and waved to the people. He gave a short speech. Then he went back to his life of leisure, and Pepin went back to running the Kingdom. Pepin died in 714 A.D.

Charles “the Hammer” Martel and the Battle of Tours
Pepin’s son Charles became mayor of the palace after Pepin died. He was twenty-five years old. He was very brave and was a fine soldier and a good leader.
Charles Martel fought in many wars, but his most important war was against the Saracens, when they finally came up from Spain and tried to conquer the Franks. They wanted to spread the Muslim religion.

The dark exoticism of Saracen invaders is stressed in this detail from *The Saracen Army Outside Paris*, by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

The Saracen army crushed many towns as they marched through Frankland. They killed many people. They stole valuable things from the towns. The Saracens robbed the city of Bordeaux and carried away many expensive items.

Charles gathered a great army of Franks and prepared for battle. The Franks fought the Saracens in October of 732. They met near the cities of Tours and Poitiers. The biggest battle was on the seventh day. Many soldiers died on both sides. That night, the Franks fought harder, and their leader was killed. The Saracens left for their camp. The Franks thought the fight would begin again in the morning.

The Franks were surprised in the morning. The Saracens had left! They had run away in the night, leaving all their stolen goods behind. The Franks had won the battle!

The Battle of Tours is very important in history. It showed that Christians would rule Europe, and the Muslims would not. Charles is said to be the hero of this battle. The name “Martel” was given to him for his bravery. *Marteau* is the word for “hammer” in French. Charles crushed his enemies like a hammer. “Marteau” became “Martel,” and the name “Charles Martel” stuck.

Gregory III was the Pope at this time. He asked Charles to fight against the Lombards. The Lombards were making trouble in Italy. But Charles was friends with the Lombard king named Luitprand. He did not want to fight him. He turned down the Pope’s request. Gregory sent another letter the next year. He asked Charles to fight the Lombards again, but Charles still did not want to fight.

The Saracens kept trying to defeat the Franks. Charles Martel finally beat them for good. He made them leave Frankland. They never tried to invade the Franks again.

Charles Martel was a great defender of Christianity. He was the true leader of the Franks, and became known after his death as the first “Carolingian” king, meaning that the family line was named “Carolingian” after his name, Charles. Charles Martel died in 741.

**Pepin “the Short”**

Charles Martel had two sons. They were named Pepin and Carloman. Carloman...
became a monk, so Pepin “the Younger” became the sole ruler. Pepin was sometimes called “the Short.” He was very strong and brave.

Pepin the Younger

This story about Pepin tells of his bravery. He went to a circus with his friends. A lion and a bull were fighting. The bull was losing. Pepin wanted the lion to stop. Nobody was brave enough to stop the lion. So Pepin soon jumped into the arena and killed the lion with his sword!

At the beginning of Pepin’s rule the King was named Childeric. He was a “do-nothing” king. Pepin was the true ruler. Pepin began to think he should be called “king” instead of Childeric.

Pepin, King by the Grace of God

This began the time when kings were thought to have the same kind of authority as God, because they claimed they had been chosen by God. They did not understand Biblical restrictions on rulers meant to protect the people from abuse by them. This attitude caused a lot of problems. It caused many struggles between kings and their people.

The Pope saw Pepin’s crown as a gift from the Church. He expected something in return. Pepin needed to show thanks to the Church.

There was a new Lombard king, named Aistulph. He ignored the peace that had been made by King Luitprand and Charles the Hammer. He decided to attack Rome and Ravenna. There was also a new pope in
Italy. The new pope was Stephen II. He sent messages to Pepin asking for help. Pepin did not answer right away. Pope Stephen II decided to go ask in person.

So he set out, in the middle of winter. He made it across the Alps, braving many dangers, and finally got to France safely. He and his priests went to see the King. He bowed before Pepin. He begged for Pepin’s help. He would not get up from the ground until Pepin said yes.

Pepin promised to help. The Pope crowned Pepin once again in gratitude. He also anointed his queen and children. He then banned the Franks from ever choosing a king outside of Pepin’s family. If this happened the Franks would be *excommunicated*, or forced out of the Church.

After his second crowning, Pepin set out to keep his promise. He fought two battles with King Aistulph and defeated the Lombards. He made them give up Ravenna and the other parts of Italy he had taken.

**The Donation of Pepin**

Italy and Ravenna were still part of the empire. But Pepin now felt like they were his. He felt like he could do what he wanted with them. Pepin had a deed of gift written up. It made a gift of the lands. It said that Pepin was giving the lands to the Pope for all time. This was another time when the Emperor’s authority was ignored.

The Pope knew the gift was valuable. The keys of the cities were taken to Rome and laid on St. Peter’s tomb. The deed of gift was also put there. They were locked up by the Pope. They were kept with his most precious treasures.

This gift of lands to the Pope is called the Donation of Pepin. The Papal States were founded by it. The Pope became a ruling prince. He became an important ruler in Europe. The King and the Pope had helped to make each other great. But the Pope surely gained the most. The King had only gotten the Church’s permission to rule. He was allowed to rule a kingdom that he already had. The Pope would never have gained his new lands or power if Pepin hadn’t helped him. The Church now became an earthly power. In doing this it lost some of its spiritual influence for good.
CHARLEMAGNE WAS one of the greatest kings Europe has ever seen. With his help, parts of Europe were lifted out of the Dark Ages. He created schools, art galleries, and monasteries. He fought battles against the Saxons in Germany, the Lombards in Italy, and the Moorish Saracens in Spain.

The Frankish king Charlemagne was a devout Catholic who maintained a close relationship with the papacy throughout his life. In 772, when Pope Adrian I was threatened by invaders, the King rushed to Rome to provide assistance. Shown here, the Pope, at a meeting near Rome, asks Charlemagne for help.

**Charlemagne and the Pope, by Antoine Vérard**

The Frankish king Charlemagne was a devout Catholic who maintained a close relationship with the papacy throughout his life. In 772, when Pope Adrian I was threatened by invaders, the King rushed to Rome to provide assistance. Shown here, the Pope, at a meeting near Rome, asks Charlemagne for help.

**Reading and Assignments**

- Read the article: *Charlemagne: King From 768 - 814 A.D.*
- After reading the article, summarize the story you read by either:
  - Retelling it out loud to your teacher or parent.
  - Completing an appropriate notebook page.
Whether orally or written, be sure to include information about Charlemagne’s victories, Roland, and some of Charlemagne’s achievements in other areas.

- Continue to add to your family tree.
- Add Charlemagne and Roland to your timeline.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Key People, Places, and Events
Charlemagne
Roland

Adapted for Elementary School from the book:
Famous Men of the Middle Ages
by John Henry Haaren
Charlemagne: King From 768 - 814 A.D.

He finally beat them. Their great chief, Wittekind, gave in to him. The Saxons were German people who lived near the Franks. They spoke the same language as the Franks. They were even of the same race as the Franks. But they had not been changed by the Romans like the Franks. The Saxons were still pagans. The Franks were pagans before Clovis became a Christian. They even made human sacrifices.

Charlemagne made the Saxon lands part of his kingdom. Many Saxons became Christians. Wittekind was one of the new believers. Many people were baptized. Soon churches and schools were built in their country.

Defeat of the Lombards
Charlemagne also fought against the Lombards. His father Pepin had beaten the Lombards long ago and gave some of the land he won to the Pope. The Lombard king invaded those lands again. He was trying to damage Rome. The Pope asked Charlemagne for help.

Charlemagne quickly led his army to Rome. They attacked the Lombards. His army defeated them. He made them leave the Pope’s lands. He took their lands and made them his own.

Charlemagne
Pepin had two sons. One was Charles. The other was Carloman. When their father died they both ruled the Franks. Soon Carloman died. Charles was the only king.

This Charles was the most famous king of the Franks. He did many wonderful things. He is called Charlemagne, which means Charles the Great.

Charlemagne was a great soldier. He fought against the Saxons for thirty years.
Defeat of the Moorish Saracens in Spain

His next war was in Spain in 778. A large part of Spain was ruled by Moorish Saracens. A Muslim leader had attacked them. They asked Charlemagne to help them fight. He took his army there and fought for them. He helped them beat their enemy. His army headed home.

Roland

On the way, Charlemagne’s army marched in two parts. The main part was led by Charlemagne. The other part was led by a famous warrior named Roland. Roland’s section was attacked. The Basque tribe surprised them as they marched through the mountains.

Roland and his men were in a narrow canyon. Cliffs stood tall on both sides, and they could not escape. The Basques stood on top of the cliffs. They threw logs and rocks on them. Many Franks were crushed. Then the Basques climbed down and attacked with weapons. Roland fought bravely. Even so, he and all his men were killed.

Eight stages of The Song of Roland in one picture

Roland’s best friend was named Oliver. He was as brave as Roland. There have been many songs and stories written about them. The stories tell of their wonderful adventures. They also tell about their great deeds in war.

All of Charlemagne’s work in Spain was soon reversed, however. The Muslims returned to the area and captured almost all of Spain.

Charles Augustus, Emperor of the Romans

Charlemagne was King of the Franks for more than forty years. In the year 800, some people in Rome fought against the Pope. Charlemagne went once again to help with his army. He entered Rome with great fanfare and defeated the rebels. On Christmas Day he went to the Church of St. Peter. He knelt before the altar, and the Pope placed a crown on his head.


The people in the church shouted the same words. Charlemagne was now Emperor of the Western Roman Empire. He was also King of the Franks.

Charlemagne built a beautiful palace in Germany. He built it in a town called Aix-la-Chapelle. He may have been born there.

Charlemagne was very tall and impressive. He had a long beard, and he dressed in simple clothes except when he was in battle and wore armor.

Armor in those days was made of leather or heavy iron. Sometimes both were used. The helmet was made of iron. A breastplate covered the chest, and a coat of mail covered the body. The coat of mail was made from small metal rings linked together. They could also be attached to a leather shirt. Coverings for the soldier’s legs and feet were attached to the coat of mail.
Charlemagne’s Reign

Charlemagne was a great king. He was not only great because of his successes in war, but because he did many beneficial things for his people. He made many excellent laws and chose judges to make sure the laws were obeyed. He built schools and hired good teachers. He had a school in his own palace for his children. Their teacher was named Alcuin. He was from England.

At this time there were not many people who could read or write. There were not very many schools. Even the kings were not educated well. Only a few kings could even write their own names! They did not care about sending their children to school. They thought reading and writing was not important. It was more important that boys learned to be good soldiers. They thought girls should learn to spin and weave.

Charlemagne thought differently. He loved to learn. When he heard of a highly educated man, he would try to get him to come live in Frankland.

Charlemagne became known all over the world. He was known for his great warrior skills. He was also known as a wise emperor. Many kings sent him gifts. They wanted to be his friend. One king lived in Baghdad in Asia. He sent Charlemagne an elephant. He also sent a clock that rang each hour. The Franks were amazed at the elephant! They had never seen one before. The clock was also very interesting to them.

There were not many clocks in Europe at that time. They used water-clocks and hourglasses. A water-clock was a container. Water trickled into it. A float inside the container rose with the water level. The float pointed to hour marks on the side of the container.

The hourglass measured time using sand. The sand would fall from the top to the bottom of a glass container. The middle of the container was very narrow. The sand had to go slowly through the narrow middle. By the time all the sand had passed to the bottom of the glass, a certain amount of time had passed.

Charlemagne died in 814 A.D. He was buried in Aix-la-Chapelle. He was buried in the church he had built there. His body was placed in a tomb, on a large chair, wearing royal robes, a crown, and a sword at his side. In his hands was a Bible.

Charlemagne is the French word for the German Karl der Grosse (Charles the Great). He was known as Karl der Grosse in his own court. This is a better name for him, for he was actually German. He spoke German. His town was called Aix-la-Chapelle in French. The name he knew it by was Aachen, its German name.

Charlemagne’s great empire did not last long. It stayed together during the life of his son. Then it was divided between his three grandsons. Louis took the eastern part. Lothaire took the central part and the title of emperor. Charles took the western part.
Lesson Three

History Overview and Assignments
On Your Own

Equestrian statue of Charlemagne, by Agostino Cornacchini (1725) — St. Peter’s Basilica, Vatican

Reading and Assignments

- To further explore Charlemagne and his life, visit the following websites and find some additional information to add to your notebook pages on Charlemagne.
  - http://www.historyforkids.org/learn/medieval/history/earlymiddle/charlemagne.htm
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.