

LESSON TEN:

An Enlightened King and a Scholarly Friend Make Big Changes



Literature Activity

Literature Activity: Read Chapter 7 of *Calendar Quest* from page 120 to the end of the chapter.

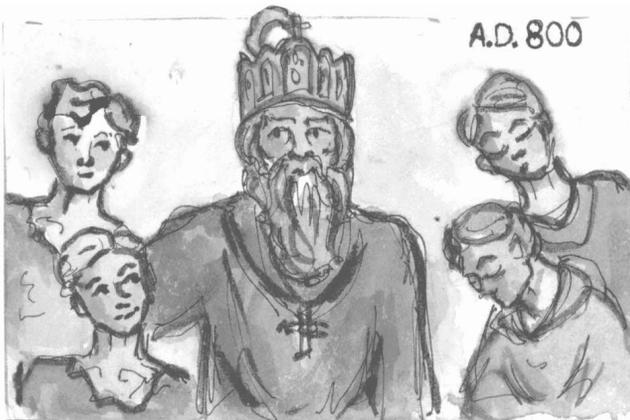
Reading Comprehension Discussion Questions:

1. Lindsie and Evan have traveled a significant distance from Rome. Where did they find themselves in this chapter?
2. What year was it?
3. Who was Charlemagne?
4. Charlemagne is credited for spreading the use of the Christian-era dating system developed by Dionysius. How he actually accomplished this is unknown. In the *Calendar Quest* story, how was the word spread around Charlemagne's kingdom?
5. With the exception of the boys copying the information about the calendar as punishment, the story of "Charlemagne and the Scholars" — as historians call it — is true. If you knew the President of the United States would be reviewing your work, how would that impact the quality of your work?

Writing Activity: Write about the part of today's story you most enjoyed. If you are doing this as a group, have the group agree on a part that is most memorable and appoint a scribe to record your thoughts below:

What changes did Charlemagne make in the calendar?

Calendar Quest ▼



Check your answer with the calendar story provided in the appendix. Read the Charlemagne section only.

Timeline Activity (for those who purchased the Scroll Timeline):

From your Scroll Timeline kit, find the page labeled **Calendar Stickers**, and cut out the picture labeled A.D. 800 (which matches the picture here). Place this picture on the 2" white section at the bottom of your timeline. Line up this sticker under the corresponding date on the timeline.

In this lesson, we will be discussing the kingdom of Charlemagne and how it led to the development of many European nations, the two largest being Germany and France. In your sticker kit, you have hats for both Germany and France. As both territories were part of the Frankish kingdom of Charlemagne, follow your Scroll Timeline instructions on page 10, and draw a single line beginning at A.D. 406 until about 900. At 900 split your line as the next ruling period for France began in 987 and Germany in 919. Extend both lines to the present since both countries exist today. The Saxon hat for Germany was worn by Otto III, one of the greatest emperors of the Holy Roman Empire. There are other periods of German history, which our timeline hats do not cover. In your studies in the years ahead, you may enjoy finding and drawing the hats that are missing for this important country.

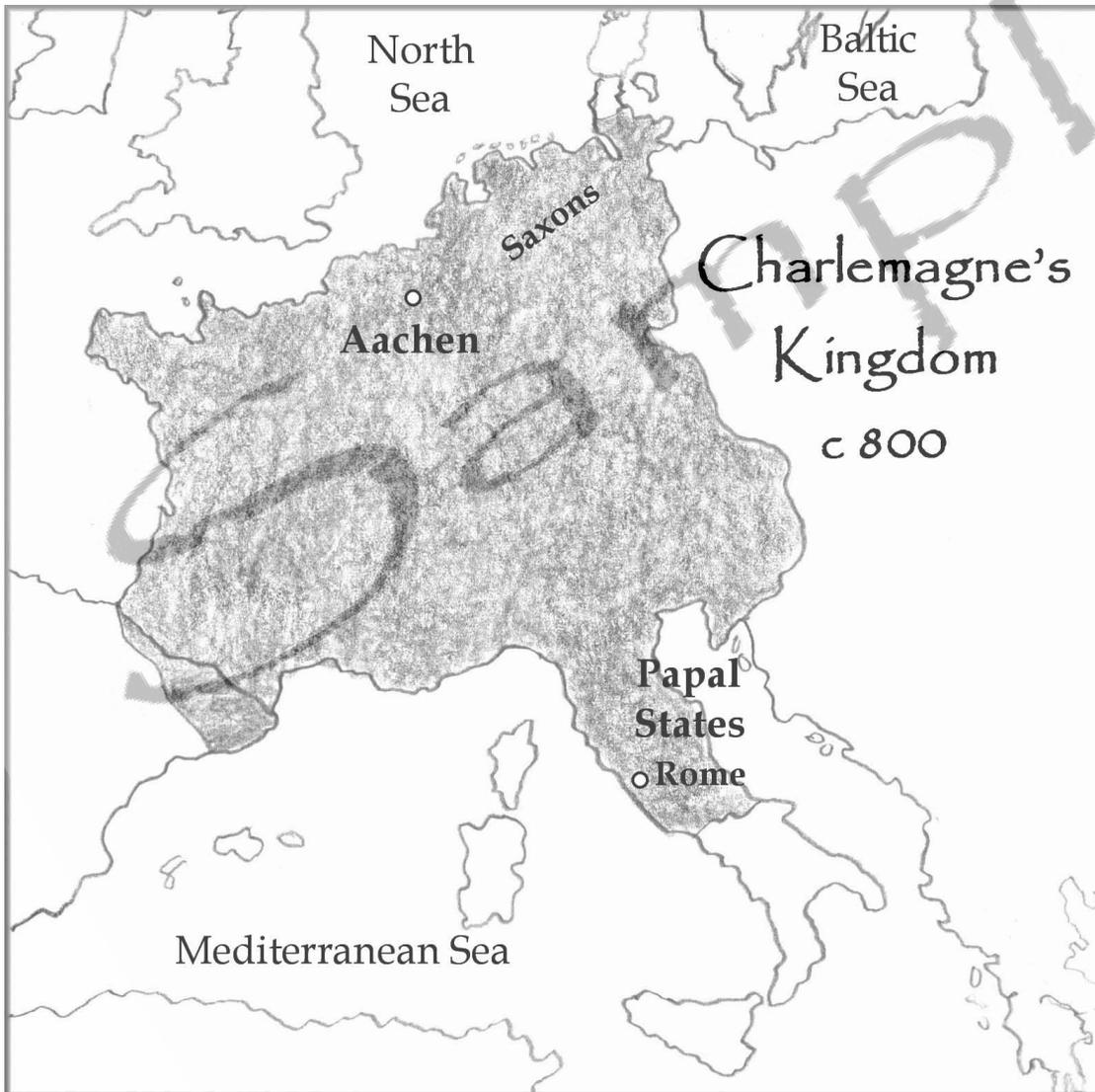
Geography Activity

Where did most of this story take place? See the map below if you need a reminder. _____

Which modern day country contained Charlemagne's palace? (You may want to use an atlas.) _____

Charlemagne's kingdom was the largest empire in the West since the fall of Rome in A.D. 476. With an atlas of Western Europe, you will see that Charlemagne's kingdom encompassed all or some of eight different modern nations. A portion of Spain is one. See if you can identify them all on the lines below:

On your map color the **Mediterranean** and the **Atlantic Ocean**.



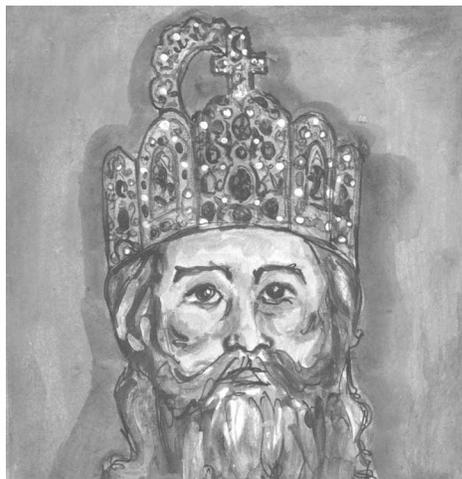
Hats of History Activity

Get out your Hats of History cards, and check out whom you placed as the ninth card in your first attempt to arrange them chronologically. If it wasn't Charlemagne, who lived during Middle Ages, move him to number nine now.

To practice the order of your Hats of History cards, shuffle your nine cards, and use a timer to see how long it takes to arrange them in the proper chronological order written below. Write your time in the margin of your workbook, recording the name and time of each person taking the quiz. The student with the fastest time gets to start the "Find the Contribution" game at the end of this lesson. If time allows, have the students practice again, giving the three pieces of information that should be associated with the face of each card as noted below; the name of the person, the name of the historical period, and the date. Again, if you have more than one student participating, have the first person point to the first card and give the name, the second student gives the historical period and the third the date. Return to the first person whenever you run out of students.

Name:	Historical Period:	Date:
1. Sumerian Priest	Sumerians rule Mesopotamia	3500 B.C.
2. Osiris	Old Kingdom Egypt	2450 B.C.
3. Hammurabi	Babylonians rule Mesopotamia	1750 B.C.
4. Ptolemy III	Greeks rule Egypt	238 B.C.
5. Julius Caesar	Roman Republic	46 B.C.
6. Augustus Caesar	Roman Empire	A.D. 8
7. Constantine	Decline of the Roman Empire	A.D. 325
8. Dionysius Exiguus	Dark Ages	A.D. 525
9. Charlemagne	Middle Ages	A.D. 800

History in a Nutshell



Charlemagne: A.D. 800

Middle Ages: Calendar Quest Chapter 7

Place: Aachen, Germany

Geographic Region: Europe (Orange)

Civilization Time Period: A.D. 476-1350

Hats of History Chronological Order:

Ninth Card

Who was Charlemagne?

Charlemagne, also known as Charles the Great, was king of the Franks who built the greatest western empire since the fall of Rome. He reigned from A.D. 774 to 814 and, during that time, spent over thirty years in military campaigns. His successes on the battlefields enlarged his borders to encompass modern day France, most of Italy, and Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and parts of Austria and Spain. By the end of Charlemagne's reign, his empire was on equal footing with the two other superpowers of the day, the Byzantine and Islamic Empires.

But Charlemagne was not just a successful military leader; he was an ambitious reformer, and a devout Christian. As a reformer, he enlarged and reorganized Frankish laws, believing that the government should benefit the people. Education reform also became a part of his legacy as free schools were established in monasteries throughout his kingdom; he believed that education should be available to peasant and noble children alike. As a devout Christian, he was actively involved in the life of the church, and he brought reforms there as well. He established a format and order for worship, a liturgy. Liturgy is the established routine of what should be said and done in a worship service or mass each week. The Apostle's Creed was one of the elements of worship added under Charlemagne. Even the monastery's scriptorium was not overlooked in Charlemagne's reforms; a new script was developed and employed in the copying of manuscripts, and this increased the volume of books produced in each scriptorium. With reforms in government, education, church and monastery, life flourished in the courts of Charlemagne.

Under Charlemagne, Western Europe experienced a brief period of enlightenment, which historians call the Carolingian Renaissance. Renaissance means "rebirth" or "revival;" Charlemagne's tremendous interest in learning and education caused him to study and promote both the ancient wisdom of the Bible and the classical works of the Greeks and Romans. However, the education and reforms Charlemagne brought about were not sustained beyond a few generations, and it would be another six or seven centuries before Europe would leave the Middle Ages behind and embrace the Renaissance of the Sixteenth Century and the modern era.

But while Charlemagne and his sons lived, enlightenment flourished in his kingdom because he loved learning and fostered it in others. Under a noted scholar and monk named Alcuin, the king himself actually went to school along with other important men from his court. This included his biographer, Einhard and even local bishops and monks. Alcuin taught his illustrious pupils Latin, rhetoric, dialectic, astronomy, mathematics, grammar and writing. Though he was never able to master writing, Charlemagne was known to keep a slate under his pillow to practice his letters, so great was his desire to be an educated man. Education became a part of Charlemagne's evening meals as jesters and

minstrels entertained other noble men of Europe. Important works of literature and the books of great Christian thinkers were read. The king's favorite book was Augustine's City of God.

But it was not just learning that Charlemagne sought to spread; ruling a Christian nation was his driving ambition. His dream was to reestablish the borders of the old Western Roman Empire and replace its emperor-worship with Christianity. Like the Roman emperors before him, Charlemagne used force to try to advance his religion. Throughout his years of military battles, the Saxons presented a formidable obstacle to ruling a Christian nation. Those who lived in Saxony in northeast Germany were polytheists, worshipping various nature gods. Charlemagne would have called them pagans; he went to great lengths to force their conversion to Christianity. Battles raged in Saxony for years. After Charlemagne's conquests looked complete, the Saxons would unite under another leader, rebel and return to their pagan worship. After years of prolonged battles, Charlemagne recaptured the Saxon town of Verden and sent word to the rebel leader that the entire town would be killed if he didn't surrender. He did not, and this forced Charlemagne's hand: Over 4,000 people were put to death. Within two years, the Saxons were finally subdued, and the rebel leader surrendered and was baptized. This tarnished Charlemagne's otherwise remarkable record as king.

Clearly, Charlemagne, or Charles the Great, was the greatest ruler of the Frankish kingdom, so it should be no surprise that his rule inspired many a poet and writer. The courage and exploits of this king and his knights were recorded in romantic, epic tales. Charlemagne had twelve knights, or paladins, Roland being the most famous. Stories of this court established the model for the code and meaning of medieval chivalry. The tales written in the Eleventh Century about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table reflect the chivalry of King Charlemagne and his twelve paladins. Next time a King Arthur tale is told, remember that its inspiration came from Charles the Great, King of the Franks.

The Contributions of Charlemagne and his Court to Western Civilization

Crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the Pope:

In the early years of Charlemagne's reign, the church was experiencing a period of decline, but this changed because of Charlemagne's energetic religious faith. Charlemagne conquered Northern Italy including Rome from the Lombards. He then gave valuable treasure and extensive land to the church in Italy, land that became known as the Papal States. Several years later, he provided assistance to the church again when a violent plot was devised, and almost succeeded, against Pope Leo III. The pope sought and found protection from Charlemagne. A short time later, in the year 800, Charlemagne spent Christmas in Rome at Pope Leo's invitation. Charlemagne went to church on Christmas Day, and after praying, the pope placed a crown on his head and hailed him "Charles, the most pious Augustus, crowned by God". The title Augustus was given to the ancient

Roman emperors, and in giving it to Charlemagne, the pope was making Charles the emperor of the new Roman Empire. But since it was to be a Christian kingdom, it was to be called the Holy Roman Empire.

According to Charlemagne's biographer Einhard, this action did not please Charlemagne as it set the precedent of the pope having authority to crown kings. This gave the church significant power. While this became the standard practice followed by later German kings who would rule the Holy Roman Empire, Charlemagne showed his displeasure by never returning to Rome. This tension between the authority of the pope and the authority of the king became a common problem throughout the Middle Ages.

Additionally, Pope Leo's action added further conflict between the West and Constantinople as the Byzantine emperor considered himself the Roman Augustus. To crown Charlemagne as Emperor of the Romans was a great insult to the eastern emperor and to the eastern church. During Charlemagne's reign, a doctrinal issue arose about the Holy Spirit. Undoubtedly, the conflict over Charlemagne's title was an influencing factor that resulted in another doctrinal difference in the church of the East, which was now well on its way to becoming a separate church.

Sticker activity: Have your students go to the sticker section, find, and cut out the picture of **Pope Leo III crowning Charlemagne** the first emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. This gave the church the authority to crown kings, setting up later conflicts between church and state. This also contributed to conflict between the Byzantine church and the church at Rome.

Ignited the Carolingian Renaissance

In Charlemagne's hunger for education for himself and his people, he sought to find the best scholar and administrator of the day to run his palace school and be his minister of education for both the church and for the kingdom. He found such a man in **Alcuin**, a devout monk from York, England who had studied under the Venerable Bede. Alcuin defined what it meant to be educated; he established a method of education called the **trivium** and the **quadrivium** based on the writings of previous medieval thinkers. Through the trivium, students were taught how to write clearly, think logically and speak persuasively. Through the quadrivium, they studied mathematics, geometry, music and astronomy. Additionally, Alcuin established a great books list that required his students to read classical Greek and Roman writers and the writings of the church fathers. The students also studied Latin. For the monk and the priest, this education was designed to equip them for their most important area of study, theology, the study of God through the biblical texts. But this education was not limited to the monk, clergy, or even just the nobility.

Through Alcuin's influence and Charlemagne's support, **free schools** were set up in monasteries throughout the kingdom for peasant and noble children alike. The story captured in *Calendar Quest* about Charlemagne praising the efforts of the poor children and chiding the sons of nobles is true. It accurately captures the value placed by Charlemagne on education and how his dream was realized through Alcuin.

To facilitate all this learning, books were needed, but the **copy practices** of the **scriptorium** were in serious need of significant improvements in both style and language. Books were copied in all capital letters without spaces between words and without punctuation. Alcuin developed grammar rules such as capitals at the beginning of sentences, spaces between words, sentence structure, and paragraphs. This increased the readability of hand-copied manuscripts. Additionally he developed a **cursive Latin script** having upper and lower case letters that made the copying of books faster and less expensive as more lines could be written on costly paper. This led to great increases in the libraries and schoolrooms of Charlemagne's kingdom.

Because this script and the accompanying **grammar rules** made such a dramatic difference in the readability of manuscripts, many books, which may not have been recopied otherwise, were put in **Carolingian Script**. The innovations of the Carolingian Script actually contributed to the survival of certain ancient manuscripts. Many of the older manuscripts were lost, especially from the field of mathematics, but those copied with the Carolingian Script survived preserving many important classical works. Additionally, Carolingian Script is still used today and is the basis of all modern scripts.

But it was not just the copy practices of the scriptorium that needed improvement; the language itself needed much attention. Latin had changed much since the years of the Roman Empire, and the language needed to be adjusted to incorporate new words and sayings for the creation of a new standard for **medieval Latin**. Once again, it was Alcuin who was up for the job, and his efforts produced the Latin still used today by scholars and by the Catholic church.

Sticker activity: The rebirth of learning under Charlemagne, also called the Carolingian Renaissance, shaped the face of medieval and modern classical education, added volumes to the libraries of learning in monasteries and palaces of the past, preserved a larger number of classical manuscripts for the future, and produced scholarly Latin. All this was

thanks to the remarkable contributions of Alcuin. As a man of learning and a man of God, Alcuin's own commentary about his life has been excerpted from one of his letters and written in the Carolingian Script he devised. This excerpt can be found in the sticker section. It captures well the diligence, devotion and motivation with which he shaped Charlemagne's renaissance.

Planted the Seeds for Feudalism

Charlemagne's renaissance was not the only unique experience for Western Europeans living between the fall of Rome and the 1300's. A strong central government was almost as rare during the Middle Ages. When Charlemagne reigned, he had successfully battled the Viking raiders, but in the years following his death, western Europe was overrun by Vikings from the North, Hungarian Magyars from the East and the Saracen Moslems from Spain. Once again, Europe could no longer think about learning when security and protection dominated each man's concern. After Charlemagne's death and the death of his sons, the kingdom was divided into smaller portions run by local lords or kings. These kings could not offer learning, but they could provide the more immediate needs of **security** and **protection** through a system of government called **feudalism**.

Feudalism grew up in the absence of the strength of Charlemagne's rule; however, Charlemagne actually planted the seeds of feudalism during his reign. In his thirty-plus years of military battles, raising and maintaining a military force was an on-going challenge. In exchange for **military service**, Charlemagne, like his father and grandfather, gave away the use of **land** to knights who fought in his battles and swore an **oath of fealty** to their lord. An oath of fealty was a pledge of loyalty swearing allegiance to Charlemagne and promising to fight at the king's command. Those who swore this oath became Charlemagne's **vassals**. A vassal was one who, in exchange for their loyalty and promise to fight, received large plots of land called **fiefs** to use as they pleased. The descendants of Charlemagne's vassals were noblemen who inherited the fiefs. As landowners, still bound by the oath of their fathers, some were reluctant to fight or work the land. Therefore, they would give away smaller portions of land to **knights** who would swear an oath of fealty to the nobleman and promise to fight for him when he or his lord went to battle. Knights became well-trained military machines, but they didn't like to work the land either. Instead, peasant farmers called **serfs** moved on to the knight's land, would work the small plots, and give half of everything it produced to the knight. In exchange, the knight would promise to protect the peasant from the Vikings or other raiders that could easily wipe out a lone peasant farmer and his family.

In this way, the feudal system provided a large well-trained army that could be mobilized to fight invaders and to provide protection for common people.

Each level of the feudal system had its problems. It was a hierarchical system with serfs on the bottom who were basically slaves bound to the land, and most serfs lived in terrible poverty. In the middle were the knights, who, in an effort to enlarge their land holdings, could swear fealty to two different noblemen. If the two noblemen happened to get in a fight and decide to go to war, this put the knight in an awkward position. The problem for the king was that some nobles were weak in loyalty but powerful in land holdings. They might defy the king based on the strength of their wealth.

The church also played a role in the feudal system. It was a large landholder, and its leadership structure was similar to that of the relationship between kings, lords and vassals. At the top of the pyramid was the Pope, the leader of the church. Below him were archbishops and bishops, and below that, there were priest and monks. The church became a large landholder because kings often gave lands to the church just as Charlemagne gave the Papal States to the Pope. But these gifts of land gave the king some control over the church especially in picking people for high positions of power like archbishops and even popes. This time, it was the king's turn to involve himself in the affairs of the church, and the seeds of this conflict caused many problems for kings and popes, and church and state throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance.



Sticker activity: Have your students go to the sticker section, find, and cut out the hat pictures that depict the system of government called **feudalism**. Feudalism provided people safety and protection, but few other benefits, as most people lived in poverty, and the system actually ended up creating lots of conflicts, even wars such as the Hundred Years' War between France and England and the invasion of the Normans in 1066.

The feudal system planted in the reign of Charlemagne is gone with the past, but many of the European nations that exist today sprang from his kingdom. When Charlemagne's kingdom was divided during his grandson's reign in A.D. 843, the boundaries for the countries of Italy, France and Germany were defined. Germany was the only nation to retain the title of Holy Roman Empire. Though boundary lines between these countries have been redrawn many times, all three trace their common religion, military, government, and noble class to Charlemagne. The handpicked vassals from his court formed the bloodlines for the nobility and royalty of Western Europe. The emerging European nations all had much in common due to the court of Charlemagne.

What Motivated Charlemagne to Make these Contributions?

The crowning of Charlemagne was the action of the pope and not of Charlemagne's design. The feudal system of government, though fostered by Charlemagne, was an unintended result of his policies. The Carolingian Renaissance that he fanned into flame was his lasting legacy, but the enlightenment it brought about cannot be credited to Charlemagne alone. It was really Alcuin, the man Charlemagne invited from England, whose brilliance sparked the renaissance of Charlemagne. He was not only the minister of education; he was Charlemagne's friend. Their common bond of friendship was based on more than a love of learning; Christianity filled the hearts of both men, and where Christianity flourished, so did learning. Education enabled medieval thinkers to develop their minds so that they might be equipped to know and love God and his truth better. This is why the Dark or Middle Ages is appropriately called the "Age of Faith," a time when learning and reason combined to strengthen Christian belief. Through the friendship of Charlemagne and Alcuin, Christianity, classical education and the copied texts of the Greeks and Romans enriched the Western world.

Sticker activity: Have your students go to the sticker section, find, and cut out the picture of Alcuin, Christian monk, scholar, administrator and the friend of Charlemagne. Alcuin has a yellow halo.

Two final notes: First, since Alcuin studied under the Venerable Bede in York, England, and since we know that Bede used Dionysius's dating system, we can conclude that Alcuin brought Dionysius's dating system to Charlemagne's court. Secondly, Charlemagne's policy of forced conversions to Christianity went against the advice of his friend, Alcuin. Had he listened to the wisdom of his friend, he would have avoided this terrible mistake.

Optional Activities

On-line Activity: Using Google, do a web search on "Medieval Sourcebook: Einhard: Life of Charlemagne". This is an excerpt from a primary source document by Charlemagne's biographer, Einhard. In it you will find many fascinating details about Charlemagne's life.

Historical Fact Sheet Assignment: Fill out a "Famous Man" fact sheet on Charlemagne or Alcuin using the information in this guide. Any additional information you may need can be easily obtained through the web by inserting either man's name in Google.

Literature Recommendation: *Charlemagne and His Knights* by Katharine Pyle is out of print, but it is still available in many libraries. The book will delight children of all ages and illustrate the impact the tales of Charlemagne had on the King Arthur stories.

Review

1. Name three ways Charlemagne and his court impacted Western Civilization.
2. Name at least one thing that happened during Charlemagne's reign that was unique to the Middle Ages.
3. Why were the people living in Constantinople offended when Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Romans?
4. Name at least two things that Alcuin contributed to Charlemagne's renaissance.
5. What was the name of the governmental system that grew up because of people's need for safety and protection from the Vikings and other raiding tribes?
6. Do you have any idea what played a significant role in ending the raids of the Vikings? (Answer: Many were eventually converted to Christianity)

Find the Contribution: Have the students play the game again as described in Lesson 5. The first student to point to the card with the sticker with the Roman Road on the back gets to start the game. Play until they have reviewed at least two stickers from each card.