

MIDDLE AGES

THE GREAT MIGRATIONS OF PEOPLES

TASK 1: The “barbarian” invasions marked the end of the Western Roman Empire in 476 BC. Using your knowledge of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire judge how barbarian the attacking Germanic tribes were. Can you remember any previous contacts/conflicts between Rome and Germanic tribes?

There were **TWO** distinct periods of the Migrations.

- the fourth and fifth centuries – raids of “**barbarians**” - mainly **Germanic tribes**
- the eighth and ninth centuries – raids of **Muslims, Vikings and Magyars**

The Barbarian Invasions

Over a century before the final end of the Western Roman Empire barbarian tribes were already both attacking and, as Roman soldiers, defending the Roman Empire. Many Germanic tribal chiefs rose to high ranks in the Roman Army – eg. Vandal general Stilicho defeated a Visigoth army under Alerich advancing through Greece in 406 CE.

The process of “integration” of the Germanic tribes was speeded by the invasion of the **Huns**, fierce nomadic Mongolian people from Eastern Asia, on the borders of the Empire just before 400 CE.

TASK 2: Study the notes below and mark on the map the main directions of attack of the Germanic tribes and of the Huns.



Visigoths

- 375 CE allowed to enter the Empire by Emperor Valens because of the pressure of advancing Huns
- 378 CE rebelled against bad conditions and poor supplies
- **378 battle of Adrianople** defeated Romans and under king **Alaric** went through Greece to Italy
- **410 sacked Rome**
- Later they continued to Spain where they established their kingdom
- **711 Kingdom of the Visigoths was destroyed by Muslims**

Vandals

- Probably the largest tribe (about 100,000, 20,000 soldiers)
- **406** crossed the Rhine and ravaged Gaul and Spain
- 416 forced to leave Spain and move to North Africa by the **Visigoths**
- Their leader **Geiseric** established their kingdom in North Africa
- **455 sacked Rome**
- **533 Destroyed by the army of the Eastern Emperor Justinian, led by Belisarius**

TASK 3: *Does the modern meaning of the word 'vandalism' correspond with the actions of the tribe carrying the name Vandals?*

Ostrogoths

- **489** entered Italy and established their kingdom there
- **King Theodoric** accepted the Roman traditions and lifestyle
- Married the sister of Clovis, king of the Franks
- 540 most of their kingdom occupied by **the army of the Eastern Emperor Justinian, led by Belisarius**

Franks

- Spread across the border to Gaul
- **486 Battle of Soissons** the Franks defeated the last Roman Provincial
- Their leader **Clovis** accepted Christianity – not the Arian heresy as the other Germanic tribes, which proved to be important later

Angles, Saxons and Jutes

- Went to **England** as they were invited there to protect England from the Picts after the Romans left
 - **Saxons** settled in the south (Essex, Sussex, Wessex)
 - **Jutes** settled in Kent
 - **Angles** settled in East Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria

} **The Seven Kingdoms**

Burgundians

- Went from central Germany to east-central France
- **Conquered by Franks in 534**

Lombards

- **569** invaded Italy and settled in **Lombardy**

Huns

- Raided Europe from their base – Attila's camp – in Hungary
- **451 Battle at Catalaun Fields** a joint army of Romans, Visigoths, Franks and others defeated the Huns
- **453 Attila died** - the end of the Hun threat



Romans

476 the last Roman Emperor in the Western Empire – Romulus Augustus – was deposed by **Odoaker**, chief of a minor Germanic tribe – Skirs.

TASK 4: *Did this event mark the end of the Roman Empire? What features of Roman lifestyle and culture did the invaders incorporate into their lifestyle? Were they truly barbarian?*

THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES – ‘THE DARK AGES’ (476 – 1000)

Compared to Byzantine and Arab Empires, Western Europe was really backward – dark.

(people living in the west) “They have large bodies, gross natures, harsh manners, and dull intellects...those who live farthest north are particularly stupid, gross and brutish.”

An Arab geographer of the tenth century

“Minimal agricultural self-sufficiency coexisted with the rule of the battle-axe.”

Lerner, Meacham, Burns, Western Civilizations, W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1993, p.263

TASK 5: *Why do you think the historians call this period a dark age? Was it really so ‘dark’? Can you think of some positive developments happening in this period? Was there any continuity with the Roman Empire? Take into consideration the system of government, lifestyle, culture, religion, literacy.*

BYZANTINE EMPIRE

TASK 6: Which important facts do we know about the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire so far?

The Eastern Emperors proved to be strong enough to resist or at least divert the advancing Germanic tribes. It was more consolidated and attempted to regain the lost territories back.

Justinian (527-565)

His main aim was to reconquer the Western part of the Empire, unify it again under his rule and reestablish the old system.

TASK 7: His armies under *Belisarius* were successful against Study the map and complete the sentence.



His dream did not materialize as he had to call off his armies and send them to fight against invading Persians and Slavs. Justinian's reign is also worth remembering because of two important cultural breakthroughs happening during his reign.

- **Corpus Juris Civilis** – codification of Roman Laws with sample examples how to apply the law, solve the cases – served as a textbook of law
- **Hagia Sophia Temple** – Constantinople, most amazing building of that period. Shape of a cross, main dome 40 metres in diameter, 40 metres high

System of Government

- **Absolute monarchy**, king + bureaucracy
- **Patriarch of Constantinople** (head of the Church) subordinate to the Emperor
- Official language – **Greek**
- Constantinople was the most important trade centre in Europe
- Centre of missionary activity, spread of Christianity – Bulgars, Great Moravia, Russia
- **Iconoclasm** – movement in the Church in the 8th and 9th century, destroying images, paintings of Christ, not to worship the statues but true God.

Empire under attack:

- Managed to stop the advance of Persians
- 640-717 under attack of the Arabs
- 717-1071 age of prosperity
- 1071 **Battle of Manzikert**, **Seljuk Turks** defeated the Byzantine army, beginning of the decline of the Empire
- 1204-1261 Latin (Crusading) Empire in Constantinople
- **1453 Turks under Mehmed II. Conquered Constantinople**



FRANKISH EMPIRE

TASK 8: Which part of the Roman Empire did the Franks occupy? Was there any continuity between Ancient Rome and the Frankish Empire?

486 Battle of Soissons the Franks defeated the last Roman Provincial

Clovis king of the Franks accepted Christianity – the **Roman** not **Arian** version - thanks to his marriage with **Clothilda**

TASK 9: Why was the fact that the Franks accepted the Roman version of Christianity so important? What advantage over the other Germanic tribes did this fact bring to the Franks?

The royal dynasty of **Merovingians** had an unfortunate habit of dividing the territory among their sons. This led to prolonged wars and chaos. Usually one of the sons reconquered the realm with a lot of effort but at his deathbed again divided the land among his heirs.

As time went on the actual power passed to the **Mayors of the Palace**, who actually ruled the country instead of weak **Merovingian** kings. One of them **Pepin of Heristal** united the Frankish lands and established a dynasty of the Mayors of the Palace, which quite soon overtook the kingdom.

Charles Martel – 732 **Battle of Poitiers (Tours)** defeated the **Arabs** and stopped their advance to Europe.

Pepin the Short – 751 **deposed** the last Merovingian king with the help of the Pope and became the first king of the new dynasty – **Carolingians**

Charlemagne (768-814), or Charles the Great, Carolus Magnus

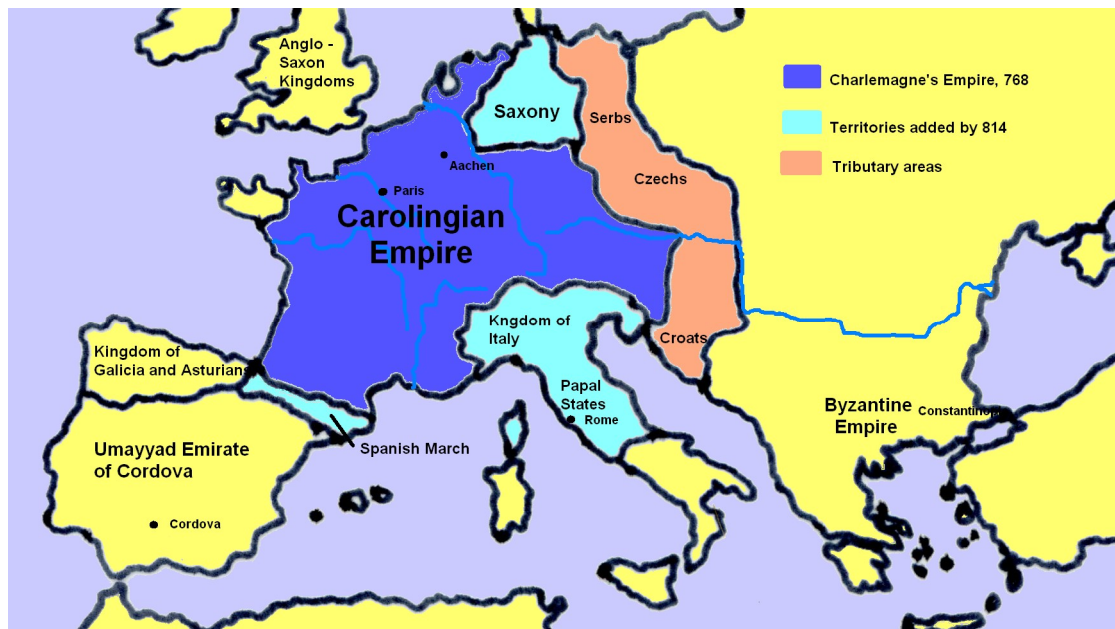
TASK 10: *What reasons lead people to give a king a nickname – the Great? Can you think of any other kings with this nick?*

During his reign the **Frankish Empire was the largest**. Charles conquered:

- **Lombardy** – 774 king
- **Spanisch March** – Song of Rolland
- **Saxony** – strong resistance of the Saxons, 30 years, harsh treatment of the Saxons, resettlement, baptism or death
- **Slavs** – forced to pay extra tax – **Tributum Pacis**
- **Avars** – 791-794 defeated, the end of their raids on Europe

TASK 11: *Did Charlemagne's conquest have any effect on the development of Czech lands?*

TASK 12: *Study the map. It is always easier to conquer the area than to control it. How would you rule such a vast territory? What advice would you give to Charlemagne?*



- He had to travel a lot – spent most of his reign travelling on horse
- Divided the land into Counties (France), Duchies (Germany) and Marks (border areas) – basis of the **Feudal System**
- Built a new capital – **Aachen**
- Kept close cooperation with the Pope
- **800 climax of power** – on Christmas Day crowned **Emperor** by the Pope in Rome

TASK 13: *Were there any other important Empires in the year 800? Consult the Atlas.*

Carolingian Renaissance:

Charlemagne and his advisors realized the importance of education for the administration of the Empire.

- Established new schools
- Devised a new style of writing – **Carolignian Minuscule** (small letters, they used Latin capital letters, but needed a new style of written small letters – great-grandfather of our script)
- Important characters: Alcuin of York (schools, writing), Einhardt (biography of Charlemagne)

TASK 14: *What does the term Renaissance mean? Is it applicable on the era of Charlemagne?*

Louis ‘the Pious’ (814-840)

The son of Charlemagne had a difficult task to rule after the glorious era of his father. To make matters worse he had to face a new wave of invasions – Viking and Muslim. His rule seems to be a failure in comparison to Charlemagne but it was not only his fault.

843 Treaty of Verdun – sons of Louis decided to divide the Empire into three parts:

- West under **Charles ‘the Bald’** – the future Kingdom of France
- Middle under **Lothair** – with the title of the Emperor, however, this part was later dividrd between the other two
- East under **Louis ‘the German’** – the future Holy Roman Empire



THE SECOND WAVE OF INVASIONS

The eighth and ninth centuries brought a second wave of invasions – Arab, Viking and Magyar

Arab Invasions

Arab/Muslim invasions are dealt with more in detail in a separate worksheet. Here we offer just a brief summary of events:

- **711** the Muslims cross the Gibraltar and start occupying **Spain** destroying the Kingdom of the Visigoths
- 718 Arabs are defeated by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III. near Constantinople. This battle stopped their advance into the Byzantine Empire, moreover, the Byzantine army reconquered Asia Minor.
- **732 Battle of Poitiers**, Charles Martel stops Muslim advance to France
- Ninth century – Muslims occupy **Sicily** (827), **Sardinia** (827), **Southern Italy** (840) and **Corsica** (850) and raid Italy
- Sicily and Southern Italy reconquered only in the eleventh century by the Normans (Vikings)

Viking Invasions

TASK 15: *What do you know about the Vikings and their voyages/raids? How did a typical Viking raid look like? What kind of ships did they use? What was their advantage? Why was it almost impossible to prepare an adequate defenses against the raids?*

The Viking invasions came in three directions according to the country of origin of the Vikings – Danish, Norwegian and Swedish – though there was no Denmark, Norway or Sweden at that time.

The Danish Invasions:

- Main direction of attack: England and Northern France (Normandy)
- After the initial devastating raids they decided to settle in **England (Danelaw)** and **Normandy (911 Rollo** was given it as a fief from the King of France)
- Their raids affected even Spain, Gibraltar and Southern France

The Norwegian Invasions:

- Attacked Scotland, Ireland and Western England from their base on the Isle of Man
- Reached **Iceland** (870), **Greenland** (982) and the East coast of **America (Vinland 1000 – Leif Ericcson)**

The Swedish Invasions:

- Went to the East and the South
- Conquered **Novgorod** – they probably were the founders of the first Russian state – **Kievan Russia**
- Sailed down the rivers to the **Black Sea**
- Attempted to attack Constantinople
- They were both traders and raiders

Magyar Raids

The Magyars were fierce warriors coming from Central Asia (like the Huns). They made future Hungary their base at the end of the ninth century and organized regular raids on Europe from there. They were one of the reasons of the disappearance of Great Moravia, they reached as far as Rome, Cologne, Aachen, Paris.

Their raids were stopped in **955 at the Battle of Lechfeld** by the army of **Otto I.** (including a Czech contingent)

