

WRITING ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

CHARLEMAGNE

As a young man, Charlemagne was taught at the palace school by the local abbot. He also learned the arts of war from his father during an invasion of northern Italy. Charlemagne grew to be tall and strong, reaching six feet four inches. His great size contributed to his legend.

In 768, his father died, and Charlemagne and his brother Carloman inherited the kingdom. However, Carloman died unexpectedly in 771 and Charlemagne became sole ruler.

Charlemagne's conquests were extensive. When northern Italy caused trouble for the pope, he invaded and conquered the area. He fought for many years in Germany defeating the Saxons and the Avars. This would eventually open the settlement of Eastern Europe by Germans. His advances were checked only in Spain. Yet defeat there became the source of one of the great medieval epic poems, *The Song of Roland*, which helped perpetuate his legend.

Charlemagne traveled widely throughout his realm, seeking to impress his subjects with his awesome presence. He also wanted to watch over the nobles so they could not increase their own power. In addition to expanding his area of political control, Charlemagne enlarged the Christian areas. He built many churches and sponsored learning.

On Christmas Day, 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Holy Roman Emperor. The historian Einhard later wrote that Charlemagne was, at first, opposed to this idea. Some historians think that Charlemagne objected to his coronation because he thought it placed the pope in a higher position than the king. Nevertheless, Charlemagne accepted the title.

Charlemagne earned his reputation as a military and political leader, a proponent of the Church, and a patron of learning. Charlemagne's coronation proved a symbol of great importance in European history. It clearly linked the emerging Europe to the glory of ancient Rome. Later, when German rulers hoped to establish their own right to rule, they called themselves Holy Roman Emperor to bask in the glory of the legendary Charlemagne.

ACTIVITY

Charlemagne was a legendary king. Do some research and find some legends or some epic poems to read. On a separate sheet of paper, write a story about Charlemagne's life in the style of a legend or an epic poem.