An Empire's Imprint

Trace how Charlemagne changed medieval Europe

9-12.WC.24 "Explain how Charlemagne reshaped and redefined medieval Europe."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three actions Charlemagne or his court took, circle the change each action produced, and give each action-and-change pair a matching number.

How Charlemagne Changed Europe

1 In 768, Charlemagne became king of the Franks. Over decades, his armies brought large parts of western and central Europe under Frankish rule, including the kingdom of the Lombards in Italy. His wars against the Saxons were especially long and violent. Conquest there was tied to forced conversion to Christianity. Military victories expanded his power, but religion also helped define it. On Christmas Day in 800, Pope Leo III crowned him emperor in Rome. The ceremony linked Frankish kingship to the Christian Church and revived the title of emperor in western Europe, although an empire already existed in the east at Constantinople.

2 Rule over such a wide area required more than soldiers. Charlemagne appointed local officials called counts to govern districts, raise troops, and carry out royal orders. He also sent traveling agents, often in pairs, to inspect officials and report back to him. These measures did not give him perfect control, but they helped connect distant regions to a central court. At that court, scholars promoted schools and the copying of books. Scribes used a clear style of handwriting now called Carolingian minuscule, making texts easier to read and reproduce. These efforts strengthened church learning and preserved many older Latin works.

3 Charlemagne's empire did not remain united. After his death in 814, his successors struggled over power, and his grandsons divided much of the empire in the Treaty of Verdun in 843. Yet the changes he set in motion outlasted his own rule. Later rulers looked to his model of Christian kingship and imperial authority. Local offices and royal orders had helped spread a shared approach to governing, while schools and copied books carried ideas across generations. His reign reshaped Europe through conquest, institutions, and learning, but the empire's breakup shows that those changes did not create a single lasting European state.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Charlemagne's conquests change both political control and religious life in parts of Europe?

2. How did the coronation in 800 redefine Charlemagne's authority in western Europe?

3. How did counts and traveling agents change the way Charlemagne governed distant regions?

4. How could Charlemagne's support for learning affect Europe after his empire broke apart?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Which had the most lasting effect on medieval Europe: the link between rulers and the Church, methods of governing, or support for learning? Write five or six sentences defending your choice with two passage details, compare it with one other change, and explain how the empire's breakup limits your claim.

ANSWER KEY

An Empire's Imprint

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.WC.24

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three actions Charlemagne or his court took, circle the change each action produced, and give each action-and-change pair a matching number. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Charlemagne's conquests change both political control and religious life in parts of Europe?	**His armies brought large areas under Frankish rule, and conquest of the Saxons was tied to forced conversion to Christianity.**
2	How did the coronation in 800 redefine Charlemagne's authority in western Europe?	**Pope Leo III crowned him emperor, linking Frankish rule to the Church and reviving the western imperial title.**
3	How did counts and traveling agents change the way Charlemagne governed distant regions?	**Counts carried out royal orders locally, while traveling agents inspected officials and reported to Charlemagne, connecting distant districts to his court.**
4	How could Charlemagne's support for learning affect Europe after his empire broke apart?	**Schools and copied books carried ideas across generations, and clearer handwriting made texts easier to read and reproduce.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Support for learning had the most lasting effect because books and ideas could travel beyond the empire's lifetime. At Charlemagne's court, scholars promoted schools and the copying of books. Scribes used Carolingian minuscule, a clearer handwriting style that made texts easier to read and reproduce. His system of counts and traveling agents linked distant districts to his court, but it depended more directly on a ruler's power. The empire's division in 843 limits my claim: these efforts did not keep the state united, even though copied texts could carry learning across generations.

Accept any of the three choices in Part 3 if the response uses two accurate passage details, compares another change, and recognizes that the empire did not remain united. For Part 1, accept any three accurate action-and-change pairs supported by the passage.