

# **"From Darkness to Discovery"**

## **The Middle Ages**

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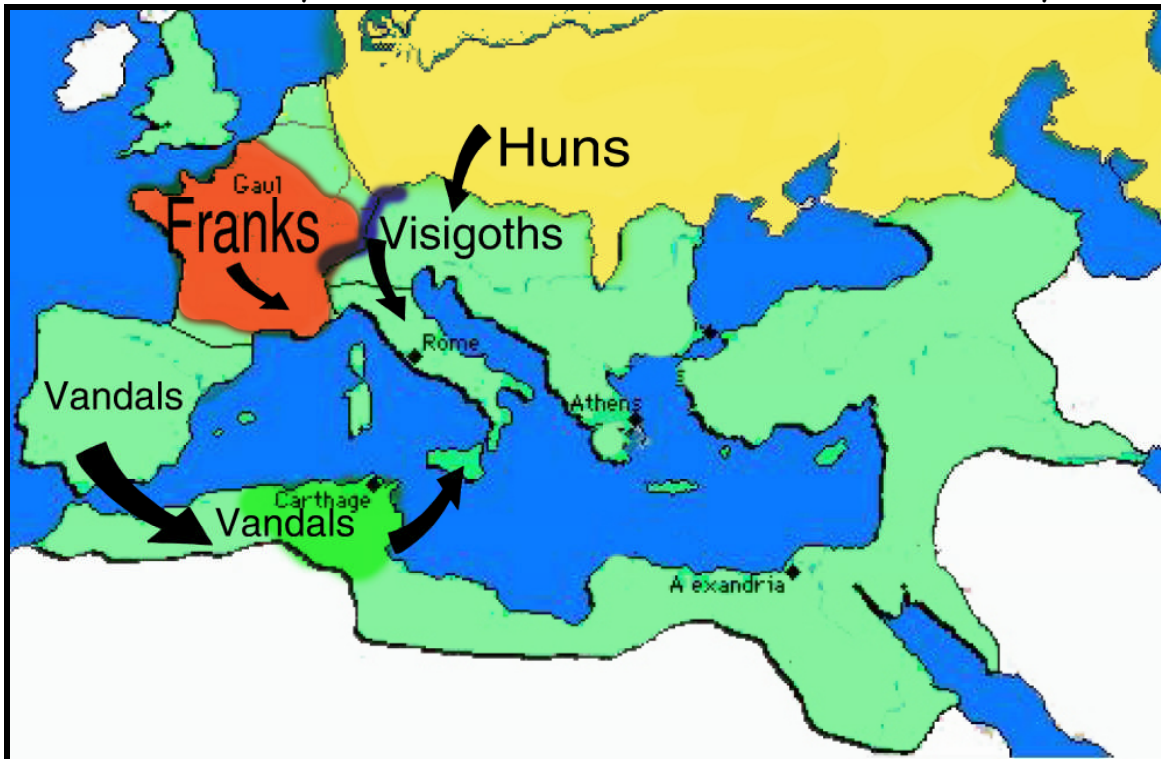
# UNIT ONE

## The Fall of Rome

You cannot begin the study of the *Middle Ages* without first talking about the fall of the Roman Empire. When we last left our study of Rome, the Barbarians were at the gate, but how did they get there? And what did they want?

These are questions we must answer before moving on to the dark period of time known as the **Middle Ages**, or to some, the Dark Ages.

Study the map of the **Roman Empire** below. Take notice of the **barbarian tribes** which surrounded her. It is weak place to be when you have hungry desperate enemies on all sides of you, and even more desperate since Rome was slowly losing control over the vast territory that it had once ruled with such authority.



Looking at the map you can see that there were 5 main barbarian tribes that had their eye on Rome, also you will notice that Rome was surrounded on all sides, even on the sea side.

The first barbarians were **Germanic tribal people** living in the Northern lands (Northern Germany, Denmark, and Northern Poland) that had been of no threat to the great Roman army for some time.

**Germanic society** was lead by a warrior and often this title was passed on from father to son. Below the top warrior there were many other warriors, then men who were unable to fight, then women, then children, then slaves. All important decisions were made by tribal voting. Thus, it was a democracy of sorts, except the head warrior wasn't the ultimate leader.

**Migration** of the family into new lands was one thing that the tribe needed to vote on. Migration was very common at this time and it was no surprise when the Germanic tribes started to make their way towards Rome.

Rome was not all that welcoming but the barbarians were smart. They knew they were no match for the Roman army, but they soon figured out that if they trickled a few families here and there across the border, no one said anything. Pretty soon, the Germanic people were part of the Roman Empire and were even serving as *Generals* in the Roman army in the Northern Lands!

So the Roman society and Germanic tribal society began to **merge** together.

Soon after another barbarian tribe entered the picture - the Huns. The **Huns** were not Germanic, but were Asian, and so the Germans fought with the Romans to drive back their forceful

leader, **Attila the Hun**. Attila was a fierce warrior, known for his violence and ruthlessness on the battlefield.

A powerful Germanic tribe, called the **Visigoths**, had their own warrior, his name was **Alaric I**. The Visigoths had been pushed out of their own lands by the Huns in the late 300's AD. But the leader of the Western Roman Empire, **Theodosius**, made a treaty with the Visigoths, and allowed them to have their own barbarian nation within the Roman Empire. The Roman emperor allowed this for two reasons, he needed their help to fight the Huns, and Rome was very weak and disjointed.

In 394 AD, Alaric became allies with Rome, and together they fought against the Huns until Attila was finally killed. The Hun Empire fell apart after that because there was no clear heir to the throne.

Alaric felt pretty good about his new power and decided that they would take Rome in 410 AD. He failed, but he tried again a few years later, losing again, but this time he made a deal with the Romans. He would take his warriors and leave, but they would have to pay him a lot of money.

This angered many Romans and they started killing the Germanic women and children who lived within the Empire. The warriors who lost their families left Rome to join Alaric, making him and his army even more powerful.

More battles ensued, and Alaric's attacks on Rome continued. In 409 AD, Alaric and his army of Barbarians were at the gates of Rome ready to attack. Much to the dismay of the Romans, the barbarians still had **allies** inside the city walls...and they opened the gates, thus enabling the downfall of the Great Roman Empire.

## ACTIVITES for UNIT ONE

### 1.1 Matching Vocabulary

**Directions:** Match the vocabulary word on the left with the proper definition on the right. Put the correct letter on the blank.

- |                          |                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Alaric I        | A. Friends in time of war    |
| 2. _____ Attila          | B. Germanic leader           |
| 3. _____ Visigoths       | C. To mix together           |
| 4. _____ Huns            | D. Barbarians who migrated   |
| 5. _____ Theodosius      | E. A powerful Germanic tribe |
| 6. _____ Allies          | F. Attila was their leader   |
| 7. _____ Merge           | G. Asian leader              |
| 8. _____ Germanic Tribes | H. Emperor of Rome           |

## Activity 1.2

### Multiple Choice

Read the sentence and circle the best answer.

1. A powerful Germanic tribe, called the \_\_\_\_\_, had their own powerful warrior.
  - a. Visigoths
  - b. Vandals
  - c. Huns
2. His name was \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Attila
  - b. Alaric
  - c. Theodosius
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ were not Germanic, but were Asian.
  - a. Huns
  - b. Visigoths
  - c. Vandals
4. The Hun leader, \_\_\_\_\_ was a fierce warrior, known for his violence and ruthlessness on the battlefield.
  - a. Attila
  - b. Alaric
  - c. Theodosius
5. In \_\_\_\_\_ Alaric and his army of Barbarians were at the gates of Rome ready to attack.
  - a. 410 AD
  - b. 401 AD
  - c. 409 AD



### Activity 1.3

#### True or False?

Put a T for true or a F for false in the blank next to the question.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Alaric was from the Hun tribe.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Rome fell in 409 AD.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Alaric attacked Rome several times before succeeding.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ The barbarians were Germanic and Asian tribes.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Migration of the family into new lands was one thing that the tribe needed to vote on.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Attila was a fierce warrior, known for his violence and ruthlessness on the battlefield.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ The warriors who lost their families left Rome to join Attila, making him and his army even more powerful.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ Hun society was lead by a warrior and often this title was passed on from father to son.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ There were 4 major barbarian tribes that had their eye on Rome.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ The Visigoths were a powerful Germanic tribe.

# UNIT THREE

## The Franks

The Franks conquered Gaul (modern day France, Northern Italy, Belgium, and Southern Netherlands) and took it from the Empire about the same time that the **Ostrogoths** were setting up shop in Rome.

Your mind is probably swimming with all the different names of the Germanic tribes by now, but it just drives home the point that Rome was in complete upheaval. The entire Empire was being attacked on all sides and there was no money to pay the army to fight for them.

The Franks had a special King named **Clovis**. He was only 15 when he inherited his leadership in 481 AD, when his father died. He spent almost 25 years fighting the Romans and eventually won. This left him in control of much of Western Europe.

Clovis was very much interested in keeping his Empire together and so he did a few things; first he used his military to keep people in line and second, he too converted from his **pagan beliefs** (to believe in more than one God) to Christianity. This area of land he had conquered had already become primarily Christian, so this was an effort to win the people over to his side. It worked.

The pope officially recognized him as the King of all his territory. This was the beginning of what is called the **Merovingian Dynasty**. The Merovingian Dynasty was named after his grandfather called **Merovech**.

Unfortunately, as we know happens, upon Clovis's death his four sons wanted to divide the land right back up so they could split it

evenly. This started 200 years of struggle and fighting as the Franks tried to unite the land once more under a single ruler.

The Merovingians were crafty and plotted assassinations. They became so busy fighting each other that they didn't have time to run their government so they let another man, called **Charles Martel**, take care of things.

Charles Martel reconquered all the Frank lands and although he didn't call himself king, he was. When he died in 741 his son **Pepin** took over, and Pepin wasn't shy about his title. He wanted to call himself King, not only that, he wanted his rule to be legitimate. That meant he had to have the blessing of the pope.

It just so happened that the pope was having some trouble back in Italy. Another tribe, called the **Lombards**, was trying to take over. The Pope told Pepin that if he got rid of the Lombards, he'd bless his rule and make him king.

Pepin said no problem, defeated the Lombards, and gave away some land to the pope in the area, and went home happy.

Maybe Pepin knew what he was doing when he gave that land to the Church, or maybe he just didn't care about it, but that act ended up giving the Roman Catholic Church total power in many parts of Italy and complete control over Rome. In fact, the Church STILL to this day has a parcel of land in Rome called the **Vatican**.

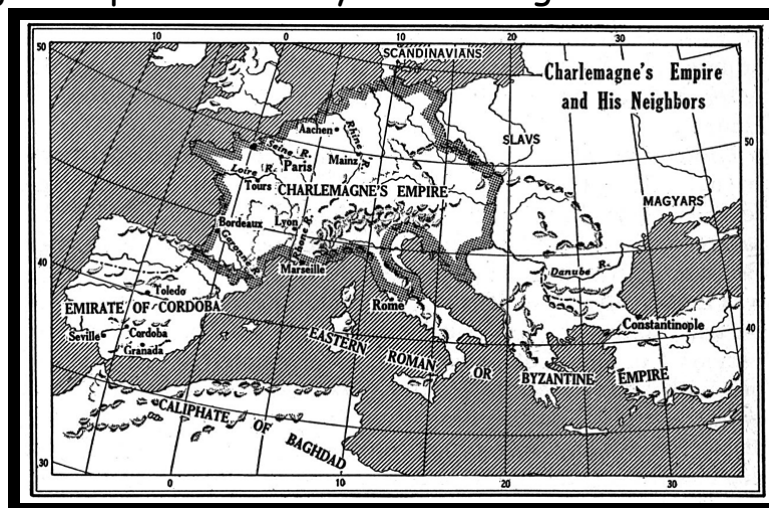
Pepin's son, **Charlemagne**, took over in 771 AD. He upheld the gift of land to the Church in Rome and Italy and went on to finish the final battle with the Lombards. When he was done, Charlemagne didn't see any reason to stop, so he went north and conquered the **Saxons**, another Germanic tribe that had taken over Britain.

By this time the Frankish kingdom was huge! It included modern day Switzerland, France, Germany, Austria, and much of Italy. In fact it was so big; it almost felt like the old Roman Empire again. The pope was so pleased with what was happening, he crowned Charlemagne Emperor on Christmas Day, in the year 800 AD.

Charlemagne had shown everyone that he was a great military leader but now he wanted to change his society back to the way it was in classical Rome. Since all the fighting began a few hundred years earlier, no one was really interested in learning to read and write except for the men in the church. There was just no time for things like that when you were constantly fighting. Charlemagne wanted to change all this so he made his nobles try to become educated.

Charlemagne died in 825 and unfortunately, his little renaissance didn't last for more than 25 years after his death. His kingdom was too large and there was no effective way to manage such a large piece of land without enormous resources.

The next hundred years brought many wars between the Frank Kingdom and the German Kingdom, until eventually the **Vikings** came along and uprooted everyone once again.



## ACTIVITES for UNIT THREE

### Activity 3.1

#### Report Writing

Before we move on lets take a closer look at the Franks and the two dynasties that were mentioned; the **Merovingian** Dynasty, which started with Clovis and ended when Charles Martel slipped his way into power. And **the Carolingian Dynasty**, which started with Charles Martel and included Pepin and Charlemagne.

Let's do a compare and contrast report about these two dynasties.

**First** - Look up each dynasty in a book, articles, or website to get a little more information about each one.

**Second** - write down the answers to the questions below.

**Third** - put all your facts into a report on the last page of this unit.

From what years did the Merovingian and Carolingian Dynasties cover?

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Name all the rulers of each dynasty, see if you can include the ones I did not have space to mention like Clovis' sons.

**Merovingian Rulers**

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**Carolingian Rulers**

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Which period is more exciting to you? Why?

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Which ruler did the greatest good for his family or dynasty?

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Which ruler did the greatest good for his country?

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Is it possible to do good for both your family and your country?  
If not, then which is better, to do greater good for your family  
or your country? Why?

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Name one important thing that one of these rulers did that was  
not mentioned in the text.

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Why was it important?

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