

Charlemagne

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Synopsis

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Charlemagne was easily one of the most fascinating figures of Western civilization, as well as the most heroic and romantic. The 47 years of his reign marked some of the most significant and far reaching events of the Middle Ages. Undoubtedly, it was his enlightened vision for Europe that resulted in the Carolingian Renaissance, a period of cultural flowering that never really ceased to develop, and which led in a straight line directly to that period of astonishing achievement we now call the High Gothic. It is almost impossible to conceive what Europe might have been like without him. Indeed, even in the 21st century, we still hear the echoes of his deeds in the historical events that unfold today.

We follow the young king in his early years as he assumes control over a divided kingdom, as co-ruler of the Germanic Franks along with his brother Carloman. When Carloman dies, Charlemagne assumes sole possession of the crown and immediately begins his expansionist policy, first subduing the Lombards in Italy, then taking on the savage, pagan Saxons. As his empire grows, Charlemagne proves himself a genius at military and civil administration.

The Byzantine Emperor and Caliph of Bagdad held him in high esteem and acknowledged him as the successor to the western Roman emperors. But it was his great Christian faith and compassion that marked him out for greatness. As a fervent Christian, it was Charlemagne more than anyone else who charted the course of the church. As never before or since, Charlemagne held an empire in thrall as both its temporal and spiritual leader. He was one of the greatest men of his or any other age.

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