Charlemagne Rules a Medieval Europe
Charlemagne was the outstanding ruler in medieval western Europe. During his 46 year reign, he demonstrated extraordinary ability in:

1. **Warfare**

   a. **Charlemagne’s Conquests.** Charlemagne conquered
      
      1. the Lombards in northern Italy,
      2. the Muslims in the Spanish March, a strip of land just south of the Pyrenees Mountains in Spain,
      3. The Slavs in Bohemia(slovakia), and
      4. the Saxons, a pagan Germanic people in northwestern Germany.
Charlemagne

1. Warfare

B. Effects of Charlemagne’s Conquests.

Charlemagne increased the power of the Catholic Church by ending the Lombard threat to the Papal States and by converting pagan peoples to Catholicism.

He also expanded the Frankish realm into an empire that included most of western Europe.
Charlemagne’s Conquests and Empire
Charlemagne

1. Warfare
   c. “Emperor of the Romans.”

At Rome in 800, Pope Leo III, recognizing Charlemagne’s services to the Church and mastery of western Europe, crowned him “Emperor of the Romans.”

Why might this title be controversial?
Charlemagne

Charlemagne’s “Roman” Empire differed from the original Roman Empire in that

1. it encompassed chiefly central and western Europe, whereas the original Roman Empire had centered around the Mediterranean, and

2. it crumbled upon Charlemagne’s death, whereas the original empire had endured many centuries.
Charlemaghe

2. Government.
• Charlemagne divided his empire into provinces, each administered by a noble responsible to him.
• To maintain the authority of the central government in the provinces, Charlemagne sent to them official messengers called missi dominici. They reported on the nobles’ loyalty and ability.
• This system of continuous investigation, coupled with Charlemagne’s tremendous prestige, temporarily halted the shift of power from the central government to the nobles.
Charlemagne

3. Education.
Charlemagne, unlike most Germanic rulers, valued education.

He

a. established schools in monasteries and cathedrals to instruct both the clergy and the common people,

b. encouraged the collecting and copying of Latin manuscripts to preserve ancient learning, and

c. maintained a palace school at his capital, Aix-la Chapelle, to educate the nobles’ children. To head the school, Charlemagne appointed the famous English scholar, Alcuin.
Breakup of Charlemagne’s Empire

Charlemagne’s death (814) was followed by years of incompetent rule and civil war. Charlemagne’s successor’s lacked his ability and were unable to keep the empire intact. By the Treaty of Verdun (843), his three grandsons agreed to divide the territory as follows:

Louis received the eastern part, the basis of modern Germany;
Charles received the western part, the basis of modern France; and
Lothar received the central part, which included the basis of modern Italy.
Charlemagne’s successors proved unable to control the nobles, prevent local warfare, and suppress piracy and highway robbery. Most important, they were unable to repel new invasions of western Europe.
Invasions After Charlemagne