

KS3 History- Lesson 1 of an enquiry of 4 lessons

# Charlemagne and Leo III

Enquiry: How powerful was the Pope?

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# The Pope

In the eighth century (700-800 AD), the **Pope** should have been the most powerful man in Europe. Many Christians believed that the Pope was God's representative on earth. He could pass special laws (called Papal Bulls), which both ordinary people and kings had to obey. This all makes 'How powerful was the Pope?' seem like a very easy question.



# Pope Leo III

Leo III was Pope from 796 until his death in 816. Yet Leo III was never safe; he was unpopular in Rome and always had enemies plotting against him. One morning in 799, Leo III was attacked by some masked men who tried to pull out his tongue and his eyes. Some sources claim that Leo III's tongue was cut out, but that it grew back because of a miracle.

At the last minute, Leo III was saved by two men who worked for the Frankish king Charlemagne. These men rushed Leo III out of Rome and took him to Charlemagne's **court** in Germany.



# Charlemagne's warfare

Charlemagne was king of the **Frankish empire** from 768 to 814. He was a brilliant warrior who conquered and controlled large parts of Europe.

Charlemagne was a christian king. He was not a peaceful king; in fact, he forced the people he conquered - like the pagan Saxons in France - to **convert** to Christianity. To pay for his wars and to keep his people happy, Charlemagne also took gold, silver and slaves from the people he conquered.



# Charlemagne's learning

Yet there was more to Charlemagne's power than war, violence and death. He also spent lots of money building hundreds of churches all over Europe. He also built **monasteries** and encouraged the cleverest people he could find to study and write for him. In the monasteries, monks studied the bible and ancient Greek and Roman texts. Some monks, like Alcuin of York, wrote poems about what a wise and good king Charlemagne was.



# Holy Roman Emperor

After Charlemagne's men rescued him from a vicious attack, Pope Leo III wanted to reward Charlemagne. Charlemagne's prize was being crowned the first Holy Roman Emperor on Christmas day in 800 AD. When Leo III placed the crown on Charlemagne's head, the crowds in Rome cheered and shouted 'hail to the emperor!' Unbelievably, Pope Leo III chose to give away some of his power.



# Glossary

**Pope** - head of the church who acts as God's representative on earth.

**Court** - the king and the important people around him. In the medieval period, the court moved around with the king.

**Frankish Empire** - all the land that Charlemagne controlled in Europe.

**Convert** - when someone changes religion (a pagan becomes Christian)

**Monasteries** - Christian buildings where monks work, live and study.

**Holy Roman Emperor** - a new, important role created for Charlemagne.



# Comprehension Questions

1. Who attacked Pope Leo III in 799?
2. How did Charlemagne keep his people happy?
3. What did Charlemagne's monks study?
4. What did Leo III do to reward Charlemagne for saving his life?
5. Challenge: Why might Leo III have been willing to give away some of his power?

