Early Middle Ages: The Frankish Empires

Background
- As Rome Declined the Germanic Tribes were rising
  - Goths, Vandals, Saxons, Franks
  - Barbarian struggles intensify
- Power struggle over lands
  - Civil-Wars
  - Vendettas
  - Peasants caught in the middle
- De-Urbanization
  - After fall of Rome former lands move away from cities
  - Cultural shifts
    - Agricultural based
      - Spring-Fall= Working 24/7
      - Winter=Relax
- Misery
  - High Children deaths
  - Parents died
    - Death always around
  - Plague
- Religious Movements
  - Some cultures revert to paganism

Clovis
- 486 C.E. – Frankish King Clovis conquers Roman Gaul
  - Converts to Christianity
    - Means of securing power
    - Roman backing for throne
    - Unifies Frankish people
  - Solidifies Frankish connection to Rome
    - Protectors of faith
  - Allows for Merovingian dynasty to control empire

Carolingian Empire

Charles Martel (686-741)
- Frankish King
- Develops Feudal System
- Spends life reuniting Frankish Empire
  - Uses Christianity as way of “re-culturing” conquered lands
- Worried about Moorish threat
  - Needed money
    - Took it from church
- 732 C.E. - Muslim Army and Frankish Army meet between Tours and Poitiers in France
  - Muslim Army expansion is stopped
  - Hailed as savior of Christianity
    - Christianity remains main religion of Europe
    - Christians assured of their faith
    - Charles Martel receives full honors and ensures strength of Dynasty
- Divides empire among sons

**Charlemagne**
- Grandson of Martel
  - Might have killed brother to do so
- Frankish King
- Reunited Western Europe 772 C.E.
  - Most of old Western Roman Empire (minus Spain and Britain)
  - Much of reign had to fight off Saxons, Avars, Muslims and Slavs
- Reform Minded
  - Inspired Carolinian Renaissance
  - Valued Education
    - Built schools
      - Palace school at Aachen
    - Personally tried to learn to read and write
  - Tried to make social reforms to improve living standards
    - Encouraged spread of Christianity
      - Connected Europe by common faith
  - Political Reforms
    - Divides empire into counties
      - Ruled by Counts
        - Whom he controlled
- 799 C.E. – Pope Leo III asks for assistance in putting down Lombards in Italy
  - Pope thanks Charlemagne by crowning him Emperor of the Romans
- 814 C.E. – Charlemagne dies leaving son Louis I as king
- 843 C.E. – Treaty of Verdun divides empire between Charlemagne’s three grandsons
  - Empire falls to chaos
  - Renewed barbarian threats
    - This time from Vikings