

Fall of the Roman Empire – Coming of the Germans

I. Why did the Roman Empire collapse? Roman Empire now Christian but has serious issues

- 1) No accepted line of succession: When a Caesar died who took over? Sometimes it was a son. Sometimes a general. No one knew for sure therefore generals fought for empire. Rome had constant civil war. This problem causes numbers 2 and 3.
- 2) Roman legions no longer guarded the borders. The armies were too busy fighting civil wars to guard the frontier and thus number 3.
- 3) Germanic tribes were overrunning the Empire

German tribes were like the American Indian tribes. There were many, many different tribes or clans who lived north of the empire in cold, cold forests. Slowly moved south for warmer climates and better farmland where they came upon the Empire. Wow! The Germans were greatly impressed by the roads, aqueducts, writing, armor, cities and government and law. They loved it but they didn't understand. Empire at first desperately tried to keep them out but gave up and in the 300's A.D. began to allow the Germans to settle in the Empire. They became Roman citizens.

II. What were these Germans like:

- Lived simply in wooden huts, small towns, and villages. One room with people and animals. Slept on hay or floor
- Wore barbaric clothing – tunic over trousers (pants)
- Unshaven whereas the Roman man was shaved
- Women did all the hard work as the men drank, gambled, fought, wore tight fitting breeches and dressed their hair with grease.
- In general, loyalty to persons was far more important among Germans than to institutions or ideas. Important decisions were made in public assemblies held in open places either at full or new

moons. When people agreed with the speaker they clashed their weapons; if they disagreed, they shouted him down. Hanging was the price to be paid for treason or desertion in battle. Those found guilty of cowardice were thrown into swamps and forcibly drowned

- It was no disgrace to drink a day and a night while staking all their property and even their liberty on the throw of the dice. These and other forms of diversion were welcomed events in their otherwise demanding lives. Hunting in the vast and dense forests was a preferred past time of German men.
- Only men wore trousers or breeches but footwear was rare for either sex.

Hospitality: extremely generous to guests and strangers. Against law to turn anyone away from the door.

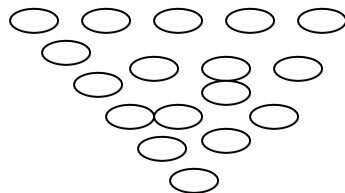
Honor: your character, respect, dignity, glory and reputation
Boy became a man given a shield and spear and guarded these with his life.

Clans: groups based on family ties. Everybody traces descent from a common ancestor.

Best man: steal wives from neighboring tribes. Take strongest friend.
Your best man. Have to steal a wife because you're related to everyone in the tribe. This helped to prevent inbreeding!

Chieftain: leader of the clan. Usually great military leader. Position eventually becomes hereditary.

Fought in small bands with chieftain at head...



Loved fighting and battle as they believed that if they fell in battle they would immediately go to the warrior's afterlife. Crazy fighters.

Valhalla – feast and fight forever. Must die in battle to go here.

III. Germanic law:

Blood feuds: quarrels in which the families of the original fighters seek revenge for generations.

Germans desperately tried to avoid these and thus they had courts and trials

Oaths: sacred word by witness of the gods

Oath-helpers: swore the accused was telling the truth

If you couldn't find an oath-helper

Ordeal: guilt or innocence decided by the gods in a severe test.

Walk over red-hot coals, grab a red-hot sword, or most commonly they would throw you into a pond. If the pure water accepted you that meant that you were innocent. However you may drown. If you floated, then the water re

Wergeld: fines for the guilty imposed by the court

IV. Rampaging German tribes

Vandals: German tribe moves into N. Africa and takes Carthage. Captures Roman fleet and raids all over the Empire. – vandalism

Goths: sack and burn Rome!

Franks: settle in Gaul which becomes known as France

Angles, Saxons & Jutes: Conquer Great Britain

V. Roman Empire in big trouble but then a new people from Asia make things even worse. The Huns!

Huns: nomadic horse people from Asia. Originally they were from N. China. Chinese built the Great Wall to keep them out. Over hundreds and hundreds of years they had been migrating slowly westward. Now they were terrorizing and

smashing the Germanic tribes. They fled into the Empire to get away from them. They seemed unstoppable.

Attila the Hun: “Scourge of God” leader of the barbaric Huns from northern China.

- Rumors they were subhuman and a race of centaurs. They rode their horses so much they grew to be bowlegged.
- They deliberately deformed their children’s skulls. Fattening their heads and scarring their cheeks.
- Used enemy skulls for drinking cups.
- Composite bows could pierce Roman armor at 100 yards.
- Marched on Rome but Pope Leo the Great talked Attila out of it. Instead Rome paid a huge ransom.
- Fortunately for Rome the Huns were big partiers. On Attila’s birthday he had a little too much to drink and passed out. Well alcohol thins the blood and he got a severe nosebleed. Attila on his back drowned in his own blood and the threat of the Huns passed. Many intermixed with Germans and Romans and settled in the country of Hungary. Hey why isn’t this story a beer commercial;)



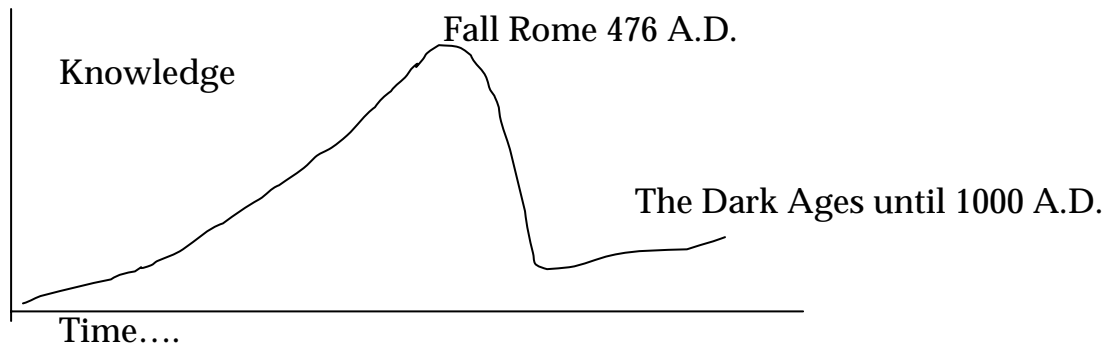
Despite Attila’s death the damage had been done. The Empire was in chaos and the last Caesar was dethroned by invading Germanic tribes in **476 A.D.** This is given as the death of the Roman Empire. The Eastern Empire does survive but the west now enters a dark time when learning, the arts and civilization are nonexistent in Western Europe for about 1,000 years or so but you’ll learn about that next year in the Dark and Middle Ages.

EARLY GERMANIC KINGDOMS: FRANKS AND ANGLO-SAXONS

Byzantine Empire and civilization stands up to the German onslaught in the East. But in Western Europe civilization has collapsed.

- Collapse law and government
- Roads and bridges not repaired
- Books and artwork lost
- Knowledge of Greece & Rome gone

The Dark Ages: time period from fall of Rome to the year 1000 A.D. Time of barbarism – lack of learning and knowledge in Europe.



Western Europe a mix of former Romans and German barbarian kingdoms. Is there anyone of importance? Is there anyone to help bring order?



Pope – claimed successor of Peter and successor of Christ. Leader of western Christians in sea of German barbarians. Byzantines try to protect them but they're too weak. They also don't recognize him as head of the Church.

Pope leads Roman Catholics. Byzantines Eastern Orthodox.

Mat 28:19-20 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

What can the Pope do? He must ally, convert and get protection from the Germans. Use western Christians and also has others to help him...

Missionaries: carry the faith to pagans – nonbelievers. Sometimes at the cost of their lives.

Monasteries: religious communities of men who devote their lives to Christ and helping people. Protect what knowledge and learning is left.

Convents: religious communities of women.

Benedictine Rule: code followed by monasteries and convents

- 1) Give up all possessions
- 2) Simple food and clothing. Must not marry – celibate
- 3) Obey abbot who obeys the Pope

POPE MUST CIVILIZE AND CHRISTIANIZE THE GERMANS!

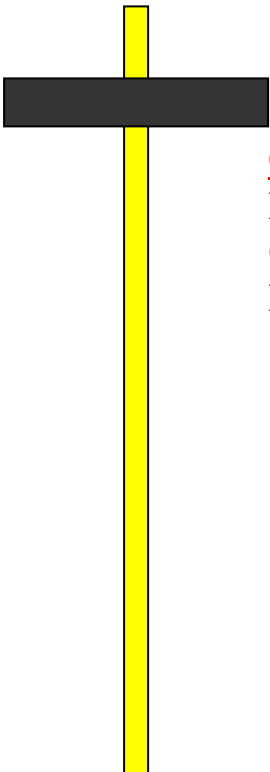
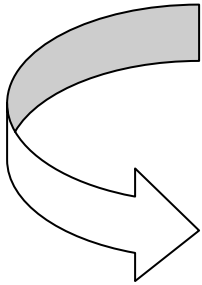
The Franks: Germanic group establishes a kingdom in Gaul (France)

Charles Martel: “The Hammer” : Frankish ruler stops a new invader at the Battle of Tours in 711 A.D. known as the Moslems.

Show map of Islamic expansion

Charlemagne: Charles the Great. Rules 772-814 A.D. Determined to reinvent the Roman Empire and spread Christianity. Warred constantly against Saxons, Moslems and Lombards.

- **Anointed** by the Pope. Blessed with holy oils to show his powers are from God.
- For 30 years fought the pagan Saxons. They raided his territories, killed missionaries and even burned



a church he had built for them. Charlemagne gave them a choice, renounce their old gods, be baptized and convert or die.

Beheaded 4,500 Saxons at one time who refused and then attended mass.

Origin of the word sword – Bringing the faith to the pagans using god’s word or the s’ word.

God’s word = sword

Notice the shape of the sword. Deliberately shaped at the pommel as a cross.

- Granted land to warriors based on military service – **fiefs** ruled by **counts** or **nobles**. They enforced the laws. Charlemagne constantly moved and spied through-out the kingdom checking up on them making sure they enforced his law. Divided empire into **counties**.
- Repaired roads, bridges and canals, reintroduces coins and mints. Artisans, craftsmen, and metalworkers reappear.
- Opened schools – churchmen, monks and nuns operate schools of learning. Monks of the time invent cursive writing!

Recopy ancient manuscripts of ancient world

NIDCE

Nidce – saves space

Nidce – saves time

- Even invaded into Spain to fight off the Moslems. Well went in and while he did the Saxons rebelled and so he quickly had to come back. On the way back some Christian Basques in the Pyrenees attacked his rear guard and destroyed it. Story became a legend and the Christian Basques became Moslems...

Song of Roland: legendary story about the heroic last stand of Charlemagne's rear guard.

- On Christmas Day, Charlemagne was visiting the Pope at Rome and while greeting the crowds, the Pope sneaks up behind him puts a crown on his head and proclaims him "Holy Roman Emperor". Charlemagne was not happy about this as it made the Pope look more powerful than him.
- Charlemagne dies and his work and empire soon falls to ruins and the darkness closes in once more.

Anglo-Saxons – Germanic tribe in England.

Alfred the Great – organizes the defenses against a new invader. England's first King.

Beowulf – Anglo-Saxon story about Beowulf killing a monster named Grendel.