

The Early Middle Ages

Section 2



MAIN IDEAS

1. Christianity spread to northern Europe through the work of missionaries and monks.
2. The Franks, led by Charlemagne, created a huge Christian empire and brought together scholars from around Europe.
3. Invaders threatened much of Europe in the 700s and 800s.

Key Terms and People

Middle Ages the period lasting from about 500 to about 1500

medieval another name for the Middle Ages

Saint Patrick Christian missionary credited with converting Ireland to Christianity

monks religious men who lived apart from society in isolated communities

monasteries communities of monks

Saint Benedict monk responsible for creating the Benedictine rule, a code prescribing a monk's behavior

Charlemagne warrior and king who led the Franks in building a huge empire

Section Summary

CHRISTIANITY SPREADS TO NORTHERN EUROPE

Europe was a dangerous place during Rome's long collapse. Without the Roman government, Europe had no central authority to keep order. Various groups from the north and east moved into former Roman lands, creating their own states and making their own kings. These kings often fought among themselves. As a result, by the early 500s Europe was divided into many small kingdoms. This marked the beginning of the **Middle Ages**, or **medieval** period.

At the beginning of the Middle Ages, most of the kingdoms of northern Europe were not Christian. Christianity was common only in places that had been part of the Roman Empire, such as Italy and Spain. As time passed, Christianity slowly spread

During which long-term event was Europe a dangerous place?

How was Europe ruled at the beginning of the Middle Ages?

Section 2, continued

farther north, largely through the efforts of two groups of Christians—monks and missionaries.

The pope sent missionaries to northern Europe, hoping that Christianity would make Europe a safer place. Missionaries converted much of Germany, France, and Britain. One of the earliest missionaries, **Saint Patrick**, was an English Christian who took it upon himself to convert Ireland. Unlike missionaries **monks** lived apart from society in isolated communities, praying, working, and meditating. Communities of monks, or **monasteries**, were built all over Europe in the Middle Ages. Most monks followed a strict set of rules created in the early 500s by **Saint Benedict**.

Why did Saint Patrick go to Ireland?

THE FRANKS BUILD AN EMPIRE

In the 500s a powerful group called the Franks conquered Gaul, the region we now call France. Under a ruler named Clovis, the Franks became Christian and created one of the strongest kingdoms in Europe. The Franks reached their greatest power during the 700s under **Charlemagne** (SHAHR-luh-mayn). At its height Charlemagne's empire reached from France into modern Germany, Austria, Italy, and northern Spain. Religious scholarship flourished in Charlemagne's time.

Who established Christianity among the Franks?

INVADERS THREATEN EUROPE

While Charlemagne was building his empire, Europe was being attacked on all sides by invaders. The most fearsome were the swift and vicious attacks of the Vikings from Scandinavia.

Who were the most fearsome invaders during Charlemagne's reign?

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Drawing Inferences The life of a monk in the Middle Ages was strict and without luxuries. Why would someone want to become a monk? Write a letter from the point of view of someone who wishes to join a monastery, explaining your decision to live the life of a monk.

Section 2, *continued*

DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

1. _____ were religious men who lived apart from society in isolated communities. (**Charlemagne/Monks**)
2. The _____ fall between ancient times and modern times. (**medieval/Middle Ages**)
3. One of the first missionaries to travel to northern Europe was _____, who took it upon himself to teach people about Christianity. (**Saint Benedict/Saint Patrick**)
4. _____ was a brilliant warrior and a strong king who led the Franks in building a huge empire. (**Saint Patrick/Charlemagne**)
5. Monks live in communities called _____.
(**monasteries/medieval**)
6. An Italian monk by the name of _____ created a set of rules that most European monasteries followed. (**Saint Patrick/Saint Benedict**)
7. Another name for the Middle Ages is the _____ period.
(**monasteries/medieval**)