

SHORT ANSWER

10 minutes for these questions (4 points each)

1. Historians speak of a Viking Age, lasting from the 700's until about 1100. During this period, the Vikings raided and pillaged Europe and explored the North Atlantic Ocean.
2. How far did the Vikings travel into Asia?
As far as Russia and the Middle East
3. After Rome's fall in the 400's and until the 1000's, Europeans found themselves in a period which we now call the Dark Ages.
4. What was a *berserker*?
A berserker was a wild, cruel, and especially fierce Viking warrior. These men were thought to be either mad or under the effect of drugs when they went into battle.
5. The Church was a shining light in a dark age, and she burned brightest in the form of monasteries that dotted the landscape of Western Europe.
6. True or False: Most Vikings went raiding or, as they called it, "a-viking."
False. The majority of Vikings never went raiding.
7. Name one of the three most important Viking gods.
Any one of these would be correct:
 - Thor
 - Odin
 - Frey
8. Name two of the virtues that Vikings prized most.
Any two of these would be correct:
 - Loyalty
 - Dying in battle
 - Bravery in battle
 - Honor
9. What was a ship grave?
The Vikings often sent important noblemen's corpses off in ships laden with treasures. One such burial boat was found preserved in a bog.
10. Why did the Vikings come to North America?
They were exploring farther and farther from home, sailing to Iceland, then Greenland, and finally Newfoundland (and possibly south to present-day Massachusetts).

ESSAY QUESTION

20 minutes for one of these questions (60 points)

1. In a detailed essay, explain the state of European affairs during the Viking Age and the short- and long-term effects of the continual Viking raids on European civilization. Consider the effects in relation to the factors that contribute to a strong civilization: abundant food supplies, safety, and a strong, central government.

Points an Excellent Answer Might Include

Food Supplies

- People made farming innovations, including the development of the metal plow and horse collar, which doubled the amount of food grown in Europe.
- Viking raiders stole and destroyed crops.
- Little security from famine or drought
- Food supply was unstable; most peasants barely survived.

Safety

- Alfred the Great and Henry the Fowler were able to withstand invaders.
- Many weak kings could not resist the invaders.
- People turned to local lords for protection.
- Feudal system began to develop.
- Never enough stability for general culture and learning to flourish

Strong Central Government

- Europe left without a central government after Charlemagne's empire dissolved.
- Many wars between petty kings and other nobles
- Viking raids made it difficult for any strong government to emerge.
- Feudal system began to develop, defining both military and social relationships.

Sample Answer

Uncertainty, danger, and disorder were the chief characteristics of the state of European affairs during the Viking Age. It was difficult to build a strong civilization after Charlemagne's empire dissolved, since Europe lacked the important factors of abundant food supplies, safety, and a strong, central government. Nevertheless, the pressures of the Viking raids and the struggle to survive did eventually lead to the development of feudalism, and so had a long-lasting effect on European civilization.

One key area in which European affairs were uncertain was in food supplies. The continual raids of the Vikings to steal or destroy food made it very difficult for people to survive. The short-term effects of these raids were hardship and privation. However, people did make advancements in farming, such as the development of a metal plow and stiff horse collar, which allowed them to double the amount of food they could grow. These developments not only helped them to survive amidst the raids but also had the long-term effect of improving farming techniques.

Danger was another immediate result of the Viking raids. Because Charlemagne's descendants and many of the petty European kings were weak, they were unable to prevent the Viking attacks. People turned instead to local lords for protection. This contributed to the development of the feudal system, which affected both the people of that time and people for generations to come. Still, because so much effort was needed for people simply to survive and defend their homes, there was little time to devote to learning or developing the arts. This fact, too, had lasting effects, since medieval society was slow to develop and very few people had any kind of education.

Finally, European society was in great disorder because it lacked a strong, central government. Not only had Charlemagne's empire crumbled, but the kings who arose in his place also frequently fought among themselves. These factors, combined with the Viking raids, made it almost impossible for a central government to emerge, but it also contributed to the development of feudalism. Power was scattered among local lords, who in turn became vassals of more powerful lords, and this system would eventually lead to the rise of more powerful nations.

Thus, the state of European affairs during the Viking Age was shaky, dangerous, and without any strong order. The feudal system which developed in response to this situation, however, had a long-term effect on Europe, laying the groundwork for the development of strong nations, such as England and France, in the centuries ahead.

2. Compare and contrast the reigns of Charlemagne and Alfred the Great. Consider the following categories in your essay: the effect of each on the development of culture, each man's political and administrative achievements, and the legacy of each.

Points an Excellent Answer Might Include

Charlemagne's Reign

- Triumphant general and strong leader
- Governed his empire with the help of loyal nobles or "vassals," to whom he granted estates called "fiefs"
- Crowned by the pope, raising the question of whether the one crowned (secular king) or the one doing the crowning (pope) should be supreme
- Rebirth of learning during his reign, known as the Carolingian Renaissance
 - Development of Carolingian minuscule script
 - Promoted learning at court and throughout his realm by founding schools
 - Never learned to write, though he could read and speak Latin
- Revived the dream in the medieval mind of a Christian empire after the style of Rome and contributed to the concept of centralized power

Alfred's Reign

- Resisted and defeated the Danes
- Built the first English navy, along with forts and boroughs to create a strong military defense
- Laid the foundation for England's unification
- Issued a code of laws to restore peaceful government
- A great interest in learning
 - Learned to read and write, even translating works into Anglo-Saxon
 - Revived learning and literature throughout his realm, including a written version of *Beowulf*
 - English culture flourished during his reign
- Renowned in his time and after for his good rule and kingdom, becoming only English king known as "the Great"

Sample Answer

The reigns of Charlemagne and Alfred the Great are remarkable for their similarities. Both men played a significant role in the development of culture in their countries, both had significant political and administrative achievements, and both left a legacy that influenced people for generations after them.

Of the two, Charlemagne was the earlier and probably the more influential. Although he himself never learned to write, Charlemagne had a great interest in learning, and he promoted it throughout his realm. The Carolingian Renaissance was the result—a flourishing of scholarly studies and the arts, which included the development of Carolingian minuscule and the founding of numerous monastery schools. This cultural development would not have been possible without Charlemagne's political and administrative achievements. Beginning as King of the Franks, Charlemagne conquered many people and was crowned Holy Roman Emperor by the pope on Christmas Day, A.D. 800. He organized his noblemen under him as vassals who swore an oath of obedience to him as their lord and received in turn a plot of land called a fief that they ruled in Charlemagne's stead and under his authority. Through these military and administrative achievements, Charlemagne united his land and created a legacy that lasted for centuries. Kings and commoners alike looked to Charlemagne as an ideal emperor who had recreated an empire in the likeness of ancient Rome.

Although Alfred the Great faced different challenges and ruled a different kingdom than Charlemagne, his rule and accomplishments are remarkably similar. He, too, instigated a great rebirth of learning during his reign, though unlike Charlemagne, Alfred was able to write Latin and even to translate it into Anglo-Saxon. The learning that flourished in Alfred's kingdom was important to the development of England's distinct culture, particularly through the literature that it produced, including a written version of Beowulf. As with the Carolingian Renaissance, the English cultural development would not have been possible without Alfred's military and administrative prowess. While Charlemagne conquered people and won the title of emperor, Alfred sought to defend his people from the attacking Danes. He built the first English navy, along with forts and boroughs, thereby creating a strong military defense and laying the foundation for the future unification of England. The laws that he established helped to restore peaceful government. Alfred's legacy, like Charlemagne's, is tied to his adeptness as a ruler. Although he did not become an icon for all of Europe as Charlemagne did, Alfred's was a powerful model for later English rulers who strove to emulate him as a good Christian king.

The circumstances during Charlemagne's and Alfred's rules were different, but both kings were very similar in their accomplishments and achievements. Their influence on culture, their political successes, and their legacy shaped Europe in significant ways, both in their own times and in the centuries after them.