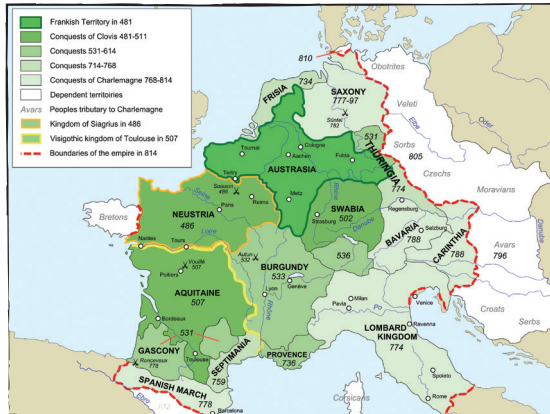


CHARLEMAGNE



Charlemagne, who lived between the years 742 CE and 814 CE, was a medieval king. During his life, he conquered so many lands that his empire stretched across parts of modern-day France, Germany, Spain and Italy. It is because of this that he is sometimes described as the 'Father of Europe'.

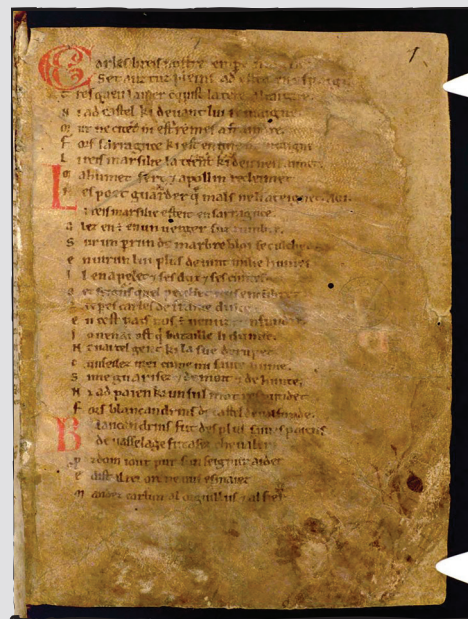
Pictured left: The Frankish Empire on the Death of Charlemagne in 814.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charlemagne#/media/File:Frankish_Empire_481_to_814-en.svg



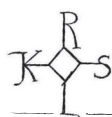
After his death, Charlemagne's legend lived on. Historians wrote about him, and poets sang songs about his adventures (but most were completely made up). These songs remained popular for hundreds of years, and people still study them today.

Pictured above: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BnF_ms_854_fol_49_-_Perdigon_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:BnF_ms_854_fol_49_-_Perdigon_(1).jpg)



The earliest surviving song about Charlemagne is known as the *Song of Roland* (named after Charlemagne's nephew, Roland). It was written down in England at some time close to the year 1130 CE. It still survives in a library in Oxford

Pictured above: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 23. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:La_Chanson_de_Roland_-_MS_Oxford.djvu



CHARLEMAGNE

A European Icon

CHARLEMAGNE

After the Norman Conquest in 1066 CE, the kingdom of England was ruled by people who spoke French, so the poem (Song of Roland, below) is written in the version of French that was spoken at the time.

Historians and language experts working at universities have studied the text for many years. There are now translations in modern English, so people who speak English can read about the legend of Charlemagne, too.

**Below are the first 6 lines of the Song of Roland.
First, read the left column.**

Charles, the king, our great emperor,
has been in Spain for seven long years,
and conquered that proud land as far as the sea.
There is no castle which can resist him,
no wall or city left to be destroyed,
except for Saragossa, which stands upon a mountain.

Carles li reis, nostre emperere magnes,
Set anz tuz pleins ad estet en Espaigne.
Tresqu'en la mer cunquist la tere altaigne;
N'i ad castel ki devant lui remaigne,
Mur ne citet n'i est remes a fraindre,
Fors Sarraguce, ki est en une montaigne.

**Now compare the English to the original text in the right column.
Don't worry, you don't need to understand it!**

**How many Old French words can you spot that are familiar to you?
Keep in mind that the words may appear at different places in the sentence.**

Why do you recognise these words? What does it tell us about the connection between English and French?

**And finally, the most difficult question... Look at the first line in both columns again.
How did the name Charles the Great become Charlemagne?**