

PEPIN THE SHORT (714-768 C.E.)



BIOGRAPHY WORKBOOK
SERIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL

PEPIN THE SHORT

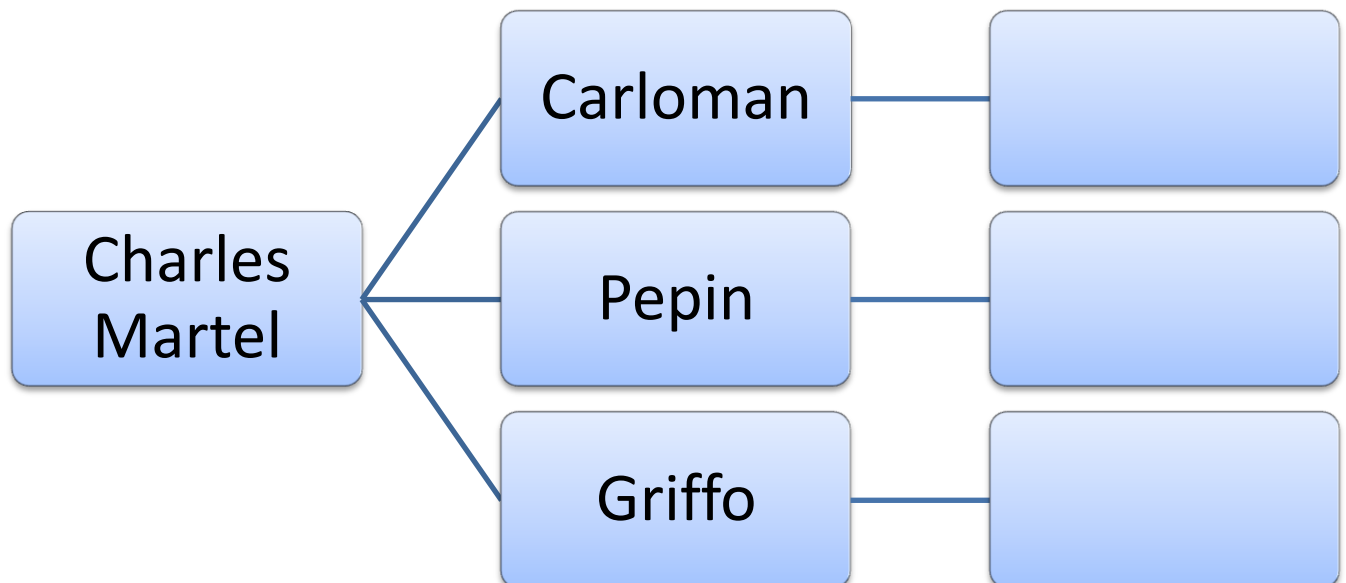
(714-768)

Charles Martel, as we have seen in other readings, was never king of the Franks, and his sons were too politic to assume the title on his death. Griffio, the third son, may be dismissed from our notice at once, as he was from the government of the kingdom, his brothers, Carloman and Pepin, taking advantage of his weakness to dispossess him. After this act of supremacy, Carloman and Pepin were for some time content to act as Mayors

of the Palace, in the districts of Neustria and Austrasia respectively, under the nominal sovereignty of Childeric III, the last of the fainéant kings, whom they set up as a puppet.

1. Who ruled as the puppet king of France at this time?

Complete the following chart, noting where/how/if each son of Charles Martel held power in France.



Carloman distinguished himself by attacking the Saxons and other tribes which threatened aggression. In 744, Pepin severely punished a revolt of his father's old enemy (Eudes, Duke of Aquitaine, a.k.a. Odo the Great), who had been compelled to do homage to the Frankish crown. Pepin soon had no sharer in his power or fame. Carloman was not made for a soldier, and, under the sudden impulse of devotional feeling, resigned his office in 747, and retired into a Catholic monastery.

2. How did Pepin find himself holding sole power in France?

Pepin, thus left sole lord of France, did not hastily attempt to cut prejudice against the grain. Feeling his way gradually, he sounded popular opinion for three years, on the subject of changing the royal dynasty, and placing the crown on the head of one who had a good right arm to defend it. Finding himself strong enough at last to take decided measures, Pepin quietly dethroned Childeric III.

Shaving off Childeric's long hair, the symbol of royalty among the early Frankish kings, Pepin sent him to one monastery at St. Omer, and Childeric's son Thierry to another at Fontenelle. This accomplished, Pepin proceeded to obtain justification for his acts from the Pope.

3. What grooming style was a symbol of royalty among the early Frankish kings?

Seeking approval from the Pope was a novel step. Although the bishops of Rome had great spiritual influence over Christendom, in virtue of their alleged descent from St. Peter, their temporal authority was by no means admitted out of their own diocese. Pepin was a wise man in his generation, though short-sighted as far as posterity was concerned. He saw clearly enough that no sanction which he could obtain for his acts was likely to be so binding upon the minds of his subjects, and the world at large, as that pronounced by a power which had already fastened its yoke on the soul and conscience.

4. What do you imagine would be the long-term consequences of

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acknowledging the Pope as having the power to approve a leader's right to rule?

The Pope, Zachariah, was not insensible to the importance of the Frankish monarchy, being at the time of Pepin's accession especially in need of help against Astolpho, king of the Lombards, who threatened to seize on the Eternal City itself. When, therefore, Pepin's envoys arrived at Rome, and conveyed their master's application, the pontiff did not hesitate to answer that it was truly fitting for one to be king in name who was king in deed.

5. Why did Pope Zachariah approve of Pepin as ruler of France?

Thus fortified against opposition, Pepin proceeded to fulfill all the ceremonies attaching to the kingly dignity. Pepin and his queen, Bertha, were duly crowned and consecrated by Boniface, the "Apostle of Germany," and Bishop of Mainz. This rite was performed at Soissons, in 752, with all the pomp that the ancient Jewish kings had been wont to employ on such occasions. The national assembly was summoned. In the presence of the great Frankish nobles, Boniface produced a phial of oil, announcing it as that which had fallen from heaven on the day when the first king of the Franks (Clovis) had received baptism. The sacred oil was then poured upon the head of Pepin, and amid the acclamations of nobles, soldiers, and peasants, he was crowned their king.

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6. Who crowned Pepin?

Pepin was a man, like his father, well fitted to rule over a warlike and primitive people. What was most admired in a king at that period was personal courage, and, what was most needed, strength of will. Pepin had both. But Pepin had one defect which, though to us it may seem a trifle, to men who prized the body far more than soul or mind, was a serious matter. He was of small stature, and acquired the name of "the Short" in consequence. Fully conscious that this was a disadvantage to him, and, indeed, hearing his name once derided by his courtiers, Pepin took a speedy opportunity of proving that what he lacked in height he more than made up in strength and bravery.

7. By the standards of the time, what was Pepin's most serious flaw?

It was common in those days to exhibit animal fights at the Frankish court. On one of these occasions a lion and a bull were engaged in a savage and mortal struggle. Pepin and his courtiers were seated round the arena

looking on, when suddenly the king started up, and cried: "Who will dare to separate those beasts?" There was a dead silence. The attempt was madness—certain destruction.

Unsheathing his sword, and glancing scornfully round upon his courtiers, Pepin leapt into the arena, and drew the attention of the combatants upon himself. Raging with fury, they turned to attack him. But with cool and measured steps, Pepin evaded their onset, and by a succession of well-aimed blows struck off, one after the other, the heads of lion and bull. Then, throwing down his streaming sword, he accosted the astonished courtiers: "Am I worthy to be your king?" A deafening shout was the reply, and the name of "Pepin the Short" was no longer a term of derision but of honor.

8. Describe the act in which Pepin proved his physical vigor to the French nobles.

Having thus established his reputation for those qualities which

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were most essential to his influence, Pepin took measures to render it permanent by acts of wisdom and liberality. He frequently called together the national assemblies, and included in the summons bishops as well as chieftains. Consulting with them as to the most prudent course of action, he preserved their affection to his person and obedience to his orders.

9. Why was (and is) it important for a national leader to ally himself with other powerful people (such as, in this instance, bishops and chieftains)?

Pepin especially courted the favor of the Church, and showed his gratitude for the sanction which Pope Zachariah had given to his accession, by assisting the next Pope, Stephen III, in a serious contest which broke out in 753 with the Lombards. Their king, Astolpho, took an active part in

the great religious quarrel which then agitated Christendom, with respect to the worship of images, espousing the cause of the image-breakers, while Pope Stephen supported the opposite side.

10. Why do you suppose that Pepin continued to court the favor of the Catholic Church?

Threatened with invasion, the Pope fled to the court of Pepin, who received him with much reverence, and in return was crowned king for the second time. Stephen even pronounced sentence of excommunication against all who should dare to choose a king of France from any other than Pepin's family. At the Pope's request the king assembled an army, and marched against Astolpho.

The war lasted for two years, but eventually terminated in the

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success of Pepin, who compelled Astolpho to yield up to the Pope the exarchate of Ravenna, the last relic of the great Roman Empire in Italy, and of which the Lombards had deprived the Eastern emperors.

11. What was the last relic of the Roman Empire in Italy?



Pepin after the murder of Duke Waifre.

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Pepin, however, had in view a more national war than this. The duchy of Aquitaine was perpetually in a state of resistance to the authority of the Frankish kings. This was owing, in some measure, to the difference of language and civilization which prevailed between the people of the duchy and those of the kingdom. A spirit of hostility was also fostered by the increase of population which Aquitaine obtained from the Gascons, a tribe from the Pyrenees, not subject to the Franks. After a long period of uncertain warfare, Pepin determined to decide the struggle by active operations.

12. Which of the following is **not** a reason why the duchy of Aquitaine resisted French rule?
- a. Aquitaine's population increased by adding the Gascons, a tribe not previously controlled by the French
 - b. Difference in civilization
 - c. Difference in language
 - d. Difference in religion

Pepin accordingly, in 759, took advantage of a rising of the people of Septimania against their Arabian rulers. He made himself master of Narbonne and other towns, and freed the Septimanians. Then turning upon Waifre, Duke of Aquitaine, he

summoned him to disgorge the spoils which he had seized from the Aquitanian lands of certain churches of France. Waifre replied in defiant terms, and for nine years resisted the attempts of Pepin to reduce him to submission.

13. Who was the Duke of Aquitaine?
- a. Childeric
 - b. Pepin
 - c. Waifre
 - d. Zachariah

It was a sanguinary and desolating war. The fairest districts of Auvergne, Limousin, and Berry, were laid waste and burnt by Pepin. In the Frankish territories, Waifre levied an equally terrible retribution. Waifre was murdered at last by some of his own subjects, at the instigation of the Frankish king. This is the one instance of actual crime which we find recorded against Pepin; and legend tells that its shadow rested heavily upon his mind. Aquitaine was annexed to the kingdom.

14. Who instigated the murder of Waifre?

It was Pepin's last achievement. He did not, as we might have expected

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he would, die in harness on the battle-field, but of dropsy, at the age of fifty-four. This event occurred in 768, at St. Denis. Long before his death he had obtained the coronation of his two sons, Charles (better known to history as Charlemagne) and Carloman, jointly with his own, and directed his territories to be divided between them.

To be the successful founder of a new dynasty demands a genius which we may justly entitle heroic, expressive as that word is of strength of character merely, without regard to moral worth. Pepin, however, was not devoid of the latter, to a limited extent, and has left a memory which, if not remarkable for virtue, is at least not disfigured by vice.

15. Of what did Pepin the Short die?

16. What, from the life of Pepin, would you like to emulate in your own life? What, if you were Pepin, might you have done differently?

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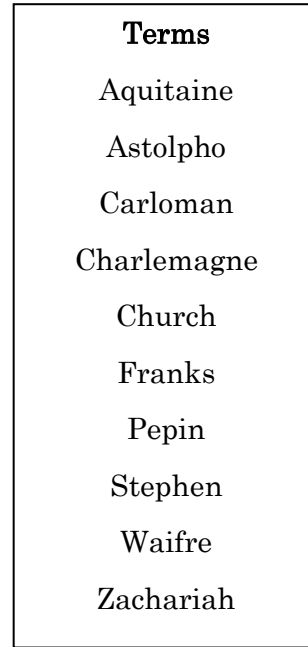
Vocabulary Terms: Match each term (used in the text) with its meaning.

17. _____ bloody
18. _____ idle or indolent
19. _____ incitement
20. _____ loud shouts of approval
21. _____ mockery or ridicule
22. _____ of or pertaining to present and worldly things
23. _____ official act of cutting someone off from a church
24. _____ pope or other chief priest
25. _____ physical height of a human being or other animal
26. _____ requital according to merits
27. _____ residence occupied by a community of monks
28. _____ respect paid or rendered
29. _____ the quality or state of being supreme ruler
30. _____ to oust
31. _____ to vomit forth

Terms

- (A) acclamations
- (B) derision
- (C) disgorge
- (D) dispossess
- (E) excommunication
- (F) fainéant
- (G) homage
- (H) instigation
- (I) monastery
- (J) pontiff
- (K) retribution
- (L) sanguinary
- (M) sovereignty
- (N) stature
- (O) temporal

Word Search Puzzle



Artistic Expression: Select a scene from the life of Pepin the Short and illustrate it.

