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The Roman occupation of Britain left little mark on the country as most of what they did vanished when they left. The collapse of Roman Britain left an opening for the influx of Germanic migrants from across the Channel. It is with the invasion of the Angles and Saxons that the history of England and the identity of the English nation began. The language and institutions came from the Saxons. The Anglo-Saxons were in the East, the Celts in the North, and the Picts in the West.

These invaders came from northern Germany, Denmark, and northern Holland beginning about the middle of the fourth century. Over the next century and a half, Anglo-Saxons took control of most of Britain, although they never conquered Scotland, Wales, and Cornwall. They divided the country into kingdoms, each with its own royal family. The stronger kingdoms often took control of the weaker kingdoms. The Saxons used the term "kings" (cyning) which meant tribal chieftains to identify their leaders. This was the beginning of the eventual unity of England. Christianity appeared in 597, which also helped in the unification.

The settlers brought with them an extensive body of lore, including versified laws as well as historical and legendary narratives. Some of the settlers could use a runic alphabet to carve brief messages, mostly on wooden sticks, but writing was not used for Old English historical or literary material until the conversion to Christianity, when manuscript technology entered from Rome and Ireland.

Anglo-Saxons would rule England until 1066.

Critical-Thinking Question:
What geographical factors may have made England vulnerable to invasion?

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During the reign of Justinian I (483-565), the Eastern Empire had its greatest era of expansion. Justinian was a dominant leader in the 6th century. It was one of the traditional duties of the emperor to guard the territory he had recovered, but this was not enough for Justinian. If the empire were to be restored to its ancient place in the world, recovery of the western provinces would be necessary. The loss of commerce in the western Mediterranean, now in the hands of the barbarians, had been a severe blow to the empire's prosperity. Recovery of these markets would mean a great deal. The food supplies that could be obtained from the fertile lands of North Africa would be a major addition to the limited production of the eastern Mediterranean.

Justinian attempted to reconquer the West from the Germanic tribes that had divided the empire. His army invaded Italy in 535 to oust the Ostrogoths who had controlled the peninsula since the late 5th century. The Ostrogoths were finally eliminated in 553. Then he set his sites on the recovery of the western provinces. The army's strength was limited. A campaign in the West could be launched only if the Persian front were at least temporarily secure. This happened four years after Justinian came to the throne. The accession of the new Persian ruler had coincided with a revolution among the Vandals in Carthage. Justinian saw an opportunity for intervention in Africa.

The African expedition sailed from Constantinople in 537 CE. Under the leadership of General Belisarius, the Vandals were defeated and their cities were taken.

Justinian's attempt to reconquer met only limited success. After Justinian's death, much of the reclaimed territory was back in the hands of barbarians.

Critical-Thinking Question:
What are the disadvantages of having an empire spread over as large a territory as Justinian's?

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In the 7th and 8th centuries, the Merovingian and Carolingian rulers made just together a powerful coalition called the Holy Roman Empire. It included Gaul, much of Central Germany, and half of Italy.

Charlemagne was one of the greatest of the Frankish kings. He waged war on the Saxons, the pagan neighbors, and the Muslims in Spain. He also conquered the Lombards in Italy and established a protectorate over the Papal States. He was crowned emperor by the Pope on Christmas Day, 800. He was able to bring unity and economy to a chaotic Europe, from the Baltic to central Italy and to north, by Hatchell a school for the nobles, and by the Church. He was a patron of the arts and sciences, and he was himself a scholar who could speak Latin and understand Greek.

During his reign, Charlemagne did much to expand his holdings. He crossed the Pyrenees and won back the Northeastern corner of Spain. He invaded and subdued the Lombards, who had taken over much of Italy, establishing a protectorate over the Papal States. He was able to bring unity and economy to a chaotic Europe, from the Baltic to central Italy and to north, by Hatchell a school for the nobles, and by the Church. He was a patron of the arts and sciences, and he was himself a scholar who could speak Latin and understand Greek.

Charlemagne had united the West. The capital was placed at Aachen (Aquisgrán, or Aachen, near the mouth of the Rhine. He promoted the arts and sciences, and he was himself a scholar who could speak Latin and understand Greek. He established a common currency, standardized weights and measures. He brought the idea of feudalism to the empire. He also brought the idea of feudalism to the empire from the Germanic tribes. Charlemagne's empire was the first attempt at a unified Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire was the first attempt at a unified Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire was the first attempt at a unified Europe since the fall of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, it was this world division that would lead to the break up of the empire after his death. After his death, and the Treaty of Verdun, the empire was divided into three parts, which eventually became the nations of Germany, France, and Italy. The