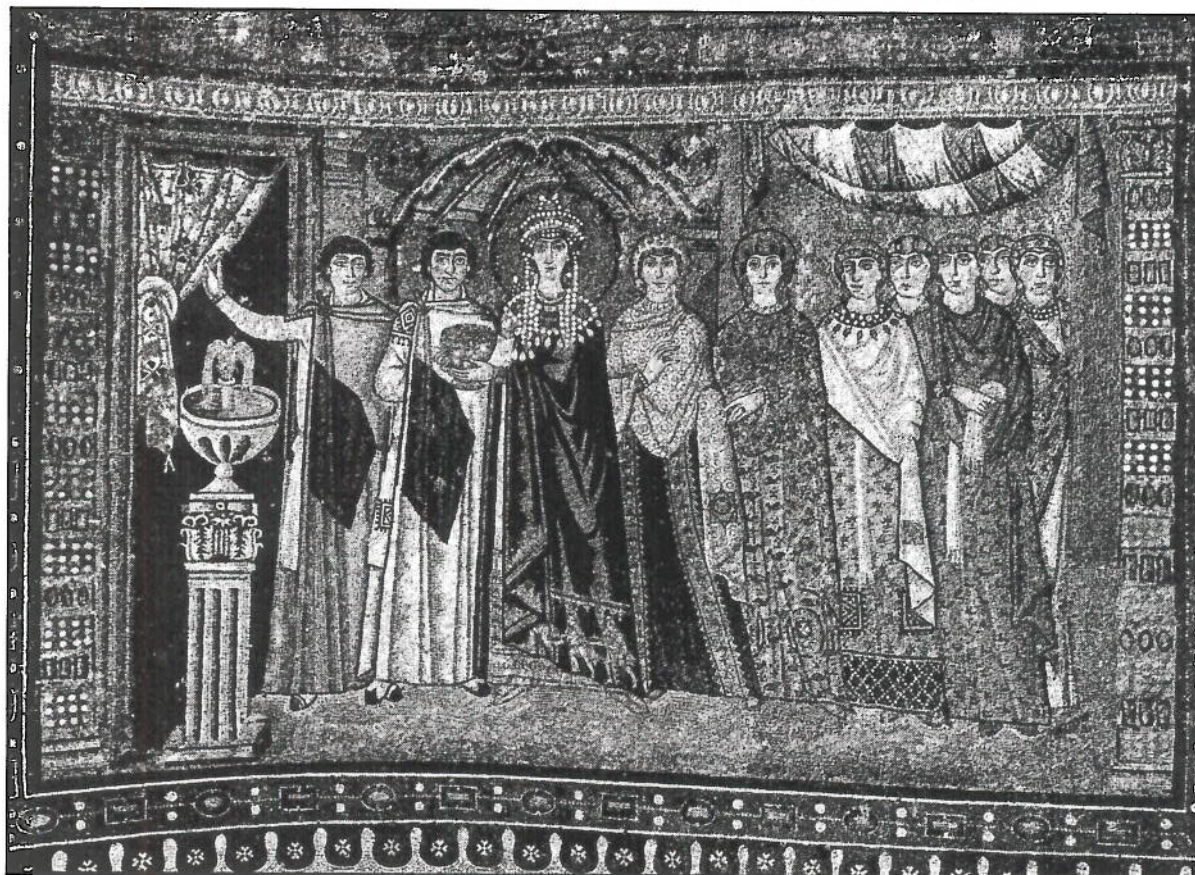


What is the Primary Reason to Study the Byzantines?



A mosaic from the reign of Justinian, circa 527 CE

Overview: The Byzantine Empire and its capital city of Constantinople thrived for more than one thousand years and helped shape the history of the modern world. The empire is an important part of the reason why Christianity survived and Islam did not sweep across Europe. Its art and architecture dazzled visitors from Asia, Africa, and Europe. Its cultural heritage affects our lives in ways that most of us take for granted. Yet the Byzantines have been largely ignored in many U.S. classrooms. Hopefully, this Mini-Q will help change that.

The Documents:

- Document A: The Byzantine Empire, 1050 (map)
- Document B: The Walls of Constantinople
- Document C: Eastern Orthodox Christianity (chart)
- Document D: Justinian's Code
- Document E: Preserving the Greek Classics (chart)

A Mini Document Based Question (Mini-Q)

Mini-Q™s in World History
Volume 2, Unit 4

What is the Primary Reason to
Study the Byzantines?

MINI-Q™ LESSON PLAN

DAY 1 – 45 minutes

- Step One: Hook** Refer to the Step One teacher notes in the Mini-Q. Read the directions aloud. The purpose is to get students engaged, talking, and wanting to do the Mini-Q.
- Step Two: Background Essay** Refer to the Step Two teacher notes in the Mini-Q. Students can write out answers to the BGE questions or the questions can simply be discussed.
- Step Three: Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing** The task of recognizing and defining key words in the question is a crucial habit of mind. The second task of pre-bucketing based on clues in the question and in document titles is a huge categorization skill.
- Step Four: Document Analysis** Do Document A with the whole class, modeling the kind of detail you expect in student answers to the Document Analysis questions.
Homework: Analyze the remaining documents and answer the questions that follow.

DAY 2 – 45 minutes

Step Four (continued): Discussion of Documents

Option One: Working in pairs or threesomes, have students discuss the answers to the first set of Document Analysis questions they did for homework. Using a different-colored pen than they used for homework, they may add to their answers. After five minutes, open the discussion of that document to the full class. Then proceed to the next document and repeat.

Option Two: Proceed as above, but have a volunteer group lead each of the three or four different document discussions. Students at their desks may add to their notes, again in a different pen.

Step Five: Bucketing and Chicken Foot Have students complete the bucketing and chicken foot work page. This step will help students clarify their thesis and road map.

Step Six: From Thesis to Essay Writing (For homework) Have students fill out the Outline Guide Sheet or write their multi-paragraph essay.

DAY 3 (Optional)

Step Six (continued): Conduct an in-class Writing Workshop.

MINI-Q™ LESSON PLAN: CLEAN VERSION OPTION

If students are ready, use the Clean Version of the Mini-Q, which requires them to handle more of the analysis on their own. Estimated time to complete is 1-2 class periods.

TEACHER DOCUMENT LIST (CV)

There are five documents in this Mini-Q. Students are provided with the same document list, but it is not divided into analytical categories or buckets. Students may develop categories that are different from these.

Providing a Buffer Against Invaders

Document A: The Byzantine Empire, 1050 (map)

Document B: The Walls of Constantinople

Creating A Popular World Religion

Document C: Eastern Orthodox Christianity (chart)

Leaving a Legal Legacy

Document D: Justinian's Code

Preserving Great Literature

Document E: Preserving the Greek Classics (chart)

The Hook

Teacher Note: The purpose of the Hook Exercise is to create some initial interest in the Mini-Q. Divide the class into pairs or threesomes and give the students about five minutes to examine the sentences and discuss the question. Then take a few minutes to process the answers with the full class.

Possible student responses:

Task 1:

For each of the two sentences below, write a word or phrase that would be a good substitute for “Byzantine.”

“My science teacher drives me crazy. His explanations are always so Byzantine.”

complicated and hard to follow

“The governor was removed from office because of his Byzantine behavior when choosing the person to replace Barack Obama in the Senate.”

sneaky and underhanded

Task 2:

Think about the idea of “loaded” words. How might the popular definition of “Byzantine” affect our understanding of the value and importance of the Byzantine people and their empire?

Because secondary meanings of Byzantine are negative, it can influence people to have negative views of Byzantine history and culture. It might cause some history writing to be biased. It might cause us to ignore the history.

Hook Exercise: Cultural Diffusion

There are words and names in history that are “loaded,”—that is, they trigger certain feelings and emotions. For some people, the word “Mongols” calls up images of unwashed barbarians riding across the plains. “Huns” and “Vandals” carry thoughts of pillage and destruction. The word “communist” produces fears of an “evil empire.” There are historical facts to back up some of these negative reactions, but much of bad feeling is unfair. For example, there were Huns and Vandals who became Catholic priests; communists are no more evil than anybody else.

CV

This Mini-Q is about something called the Byzantine Empire. Although it lasted more than 1,000 years, it often gets slighted in textbooks and history classes. One possible reason is that “Byzantine” has become a loaded word.

The Byzantine Empire was not known by that name during its time. The Byzantines called themselves Rhomaioi (“roo-my-oy”), which is Greek for “Romans.” The term “Byzantine” was popularized centuries after the empire ended and was used mainly by people in western Europe to distinguish their history from that of Constantinople and the east.

Later, the term “Byzantine” took on a different meaning. Perhaps because of the empire’s shifting boundaries, high turnover of emperors (many of them murdered) and elaborate court rituals, “Byzantine” took on a negative meaning. In fact, dictionaries today define the term Byzantine as “strangely complicated” or “devious, sneaky.”

Task 1: For each of the two sentences below, write a word or phrase that would be a good substitute for “Byzantine.”

“My science teacher drives me crazy. His explanations are always so Byzantine.”

“The governor was removed from office because of his Byzantine behavior when choosing the person to replace Barack Obama in the Senate.”

Task 2: Think about the idea of “loaded” words. How might the popular definition of “Byzantine” affect our understanding of the value and importance of the Byzantine people and their empire?

Establishing the Context

General Instructions

- Review the Timeline on the Background Essay Questions page and find a map of the Mediterranean region.
- Pre-teach the bold-faced vocabulary.
- Have students read the Background Essay or read it aloud.
- Have students answer the Background Essay questions.

Specific Considerations

The main purpose of the Background Essay is to create a context for the Mini-Q exercise. Its job is to provide a sense of time, place, and story, and to introduce important vocabulary and concepts. Doing this well gives all students a more equal chance to succeed with the Mini-Q.

Time: Be sure students review the timeline on the Background Essay Questions page.

Place: Refer to a wall map showing the Mediterranean region. Review key place names mentioned in the Background Essay (Constantinople, Rome, Roman Empire, Britain, Europe, Byzantine Empire, Persia, Jerusalem, Turkey).

Story: We suggest reading the Background Essay aloud. It is good for many students, even good readers, to hear the words as they see them. For many, it is important to hear the cadence of the language, to experience pauses and emphasis. Use the Background Essay questions to review the text.

Vocabulary and Concepts: You may want to pre-teach the five bold-faced terms in the essay. Our feeling about vocabulary is that some pre-teaching is good, but keep the word list short. When reading aloud, see how much students can get from context.

What is the Primary Reason to Study the Byzantines?

In 323 CE, a young Roman military officer, born in Moesia (modern-day Serbia) and recently stationed in Britain, successfully defeated three other generals to become the Emperor of Rome. The young emperor's name was Constantine and he was quick to make two decisions that would change European and Middle Eastern history. First, he gave Christianity legal standing within the empire. Second, in 330 CE, he moved the **imperial capital** from Rome to Byzantium, a small seaside trade town in modern-day Turkey. Constantine relocated the government for two reasons: He wanted to be able to pay closer attention to challenges from Persia and the Germanic tribes along the Danube River. He also wanted to be nearer to the spiritual and cultural richness of cities like Jerusalem, Nicomedia, and ancient Troy.

Constantine lavishly built up Byzantium and renamed it after himself – **Constantinople**. The city would grow to 500,000 people and in time showcase the **Hagia Sophia** and other stunning architectural wonders. Constantinople would remain the capital and holy city of the Eastern Roman Empire until its capture by the Turks in 1453.

Constantine had made a wise decision to get out of Rome. Tribes from the frontier soon overran the once-mighty city; Constantinople was spared much of this early onslaught. Constantine's empire was also fortunate to have a second great leader, **Justinian**, who reigned from 527 to 565. Known as "the emperor who never sleeps," Justinian found time between his prayers, his study, and his rule to organize the writing of the Justinian Code, which is one of the features in this Mini-Q.

In the years after Constantine, Latin replaced Greek as the language of court and the church, though Greek remained the language heard on the street. Also, the Byzantine Orthodox Church grew apart from the Catholic Church of the Romans. These differences led to an official split in 1054, which continues to this day.

Throughout its 1,123-year history, the Byzantine Empire expanded and collapsed much like an accordion. It grew early and then shrank in the 600s under pressure from the Arabs. It rose again in the 900s and 1000s and then fell back under attacks by the **Crusaders** in the 1200s. It recovered, but gradually gave way to the Turks before collapsing for good in 1453. The Turks changed Constantinople's name to Istanbul and made Islam the official religion. The Byzantine Empire was no more.

For whatever reason, Byzantine history is often ignored or downplayed in American classrooms. This is puzzling, since the achievements of the Byzantines reach to the present day. Can you make a case for giving the Byzantines more attention? Examine the documents that follow and decide what aspects of the Byzantine Empire are most impressive. Then answer the question: *What is the primary reason to study the Byzantines?*



Hagia Sophia, famous Byzantine church, now a mosque

Document A: The Byzantine Empire, 1050 CE

Content Notes:

- John Julius Norwich (b. 1929) ranks among the world's leading authorities on Byzantine history. He served in Great Britain's House of Lords before dedicating himself to the work of a historian. Norwich is the author of the three-volume work entitled *Byzantium* and is the host of many popular historical documentaries that have been broadcast on British television.
- For centuries, the Byzantine Empire protected western Europe by acting as a buffer against Muslim attacks. However, the Byzantine Empire and western Europe had many conflicts of their own. For example, they disagreed about many religious matters, such as who was in charge of the Christian church. The church in the West believed that the Pope was in charge, but in Byzantium, the church thought that the emperor was in charge.
- The Byzantines not only faced Persian and Arab invaders from the east, but they also dealt with Slav and Avar invaders from the north. Slavs continually raided the Byzantine Empire during the 500s. In fact, at one point, the Slavs threatened Constantinople itself. In the late 500s, Avars started to attack the Balkans. They gathered a large force that laid siege to Constantinople in 626. This attempt to capture the city, like many others, failed.
- As noted earlier, the Byzantine Empire expanded and contracted several times over the course of 1,000 years. A common scenario involved enemy troops, such as the Arabs or Bulgars, conquering large parts of the empire. When these forces reached Constantinople, they were turned back. Then the Byzantines went on the offensive and reconquered much of their lost territory.

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
 1. What religion dominated western and eastern Europe in 1050? What religion dominated northern Africa and Southwest Asia?

Christianity in Europe and Islam in Africa and Asia
 2. What Christian city was the closest to Muslim lands in Asia?

Constantinople
 3. What is the significance of the quote from John Julius Norwich's book?

It tells us that the Byzantines, in essence, kept Christianity alive in the Western world. Had things gone differently, Islam would be the primary religion just about everywhere.
 4. Based on this document, why should we study the Byzantines?

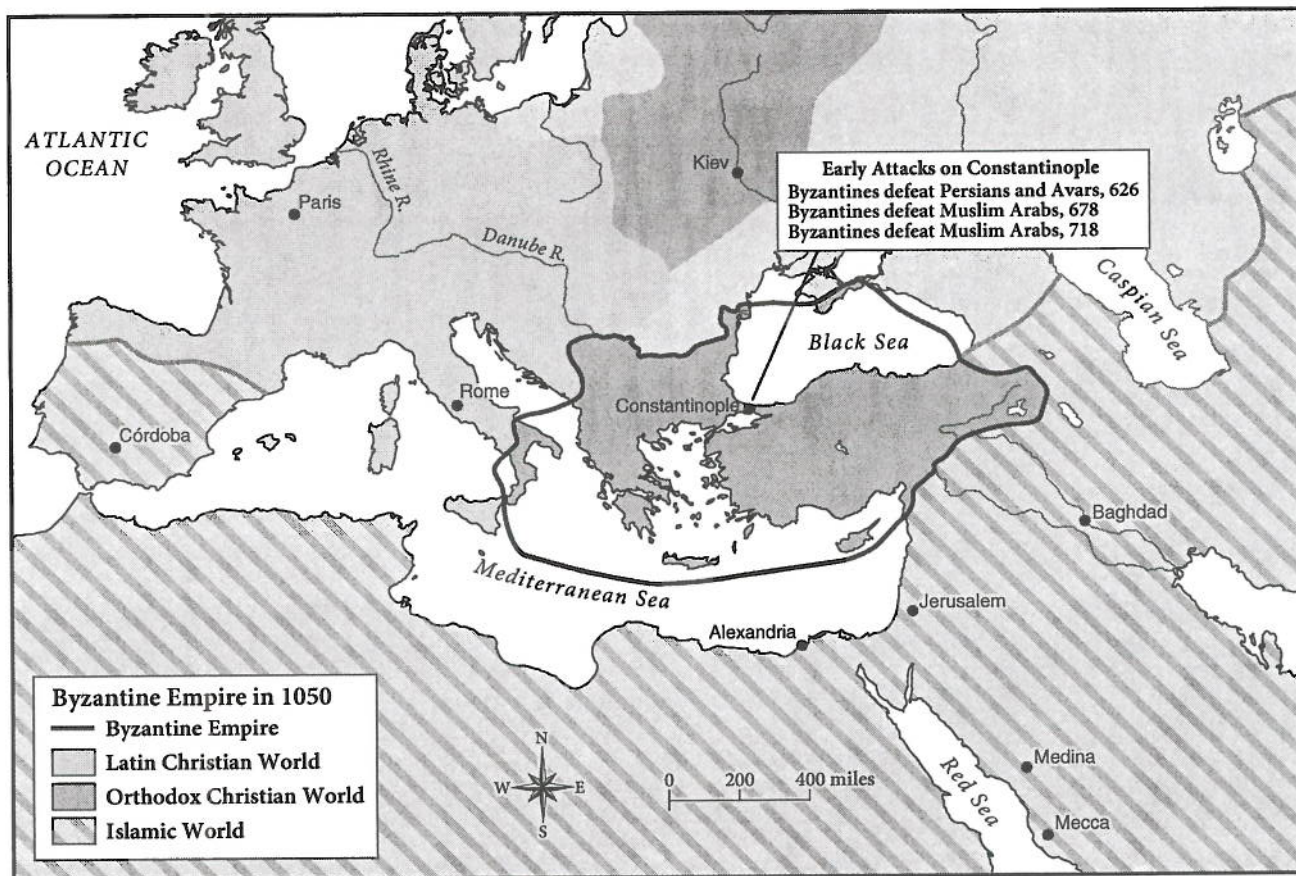
The document shows that the Byzantines controlled territory between western Europe and the Middle East. They were a buffer between Christianity and Islam. Had the Byzantine Empire fallen to the Arabs in the 7th century, Islam might have overtaken not only the Eastern Orthodox Church but the Latin Christian Church as well. Because the consequences of a Muslim advance were potentially so great, this is a good reason to study the Byzantines.

Document A

Sources: John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium*, Vintage, 1998. Map created from various sources.

The Byzantines ... [withstood] five years of siege by [the Arabs] hitherto considered irresistible, and in doing so ... saved Western civilization. Had the [Arabs] captured Constantinople in the seventh century...all Europe - and America - might be Muslim today.

CV



Document B: The Walls of Constantinople

Content Notes:

- All in all, Constantinople had 13 miles of walls. The two inner walls were guarded by 192 towers. Invaders who managed to breach or climb the first wall were exposed to archery fire from the towers with little opportunity for cover.
- An attack by sea was thwarted by more than the single seaward wall. The current in the Bosphorus strait was very strong and did much to discourage attack. Also, the Byzantines developed a weapon called Greek fire. The exact recipe isn't known, but Greek fire is believed to have been a mix of sulphur, pitch, and crude oil that could be fired on enemy ships using a kind of siphon gun or pump. It burst into flame on firing and could not be extinguished by water. It did as much psychological damage as physical.
- Constantinople's fall at the hands of the Crusaders resulted more from a miscalculation and misunderstanding by the people of Constantinople. In 1203, when a fleet of 200 Venetian ships appeared in the Bosphorus, many of the residents of the city thought this was just another attempt by a claimant to the Byzantine throne to take power. It was not seen as an attack by a foreign nation. This led to a half-hearted defense of the city, a successful attack by the Crusader fleet on the seaward side, and pillaging on a grand scale. The Crusaders and their Latin administrators ruled the city for 57 years, leaving it in a state of tattered neglect when they were forced out in 1261.
- Constantinople finally fell to the Turks in 1453. The Turks became the first to succeed in a full-fledged land assault primarily because of gunpowder and the use of huge cannons. The Turkish Sultan Mehmet II had his army hammer the walls for nearly fifty days with cannonballs, some weighing more than 1,000 pounds. Even Constantinople's famed walls could not stand up to that pressure. At On May 29, 1453, Constantinople ceased to be a buffer between Islam and the West.

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
 1. Why were the walls of Constantinople built? Why was it so difficult for an attacking enemy to break through them?

The walls were built to keep out the Huns and the Goths, who were overrunning Rome.

The walls were hard to break through because there was a moat 60 feet wide and 22 feet deep. Plus, there were actually three walls, each 25 feet thick, and protected by 192 towers. Each tower housed archers and missile throwers. Until the Turks arrived with gunpowder in 1453, the land walls were never breached.
 2. Why couldn't an enemy attack on the seaward side of the city?

The seaward side also had a wall and was protected by the Byzantine fleet.
 3. In its 1,100-year history, how many attempts were made to take the city? How many were successful?

There were 24 attempts and two were successful: Crusaders in 1204 and the Turks (who took the city for good) in 1453.
 4. Judging from the illustration, what conclusions can you draw about Byzantine engineering and architecture?

They Byzantines must have been very skilled builders and designers to create such a strong and well-planned line of defense. It takes a lot of innovation to keep away so many would-be invaders.
 5. Based on this document, why should we study the Byzantines?

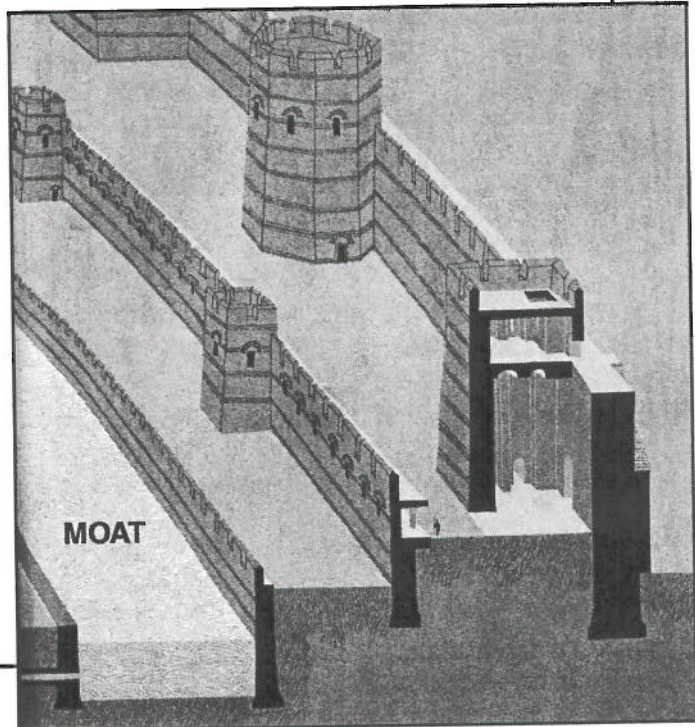
This document helps to explain how the Byzantines were able to act as a successful buffer between the Christian and Islamic worlds. Much of it had to do with the walls of their capital city, Constantinople. The walls also teach us that we should study the Byzantines not just because they protected western Europe from overthrow but also because they had remarkable achievements of their own. No city in Europe, in fact no city in the world, had the defenses of Constantinople.

Document B

Source: Philip Sherrard, *The Great Ages of Man: Byzantium*, Time-Life Books, New York, 1966; drawing courtesy of the David Klein estate.

The elaborate defense works that surrounded Constantinople made it in its day the best-fortified city in the world.... The walls were erected in the Fifth Century to protect the city against the Goths and Huns, who had captured Rome. They served their purpose well, holding off invaders for nearly one thousand years ... a single wall bounded the city's seaward sides, which were defended by the Byzantine fleet. On the land side, the Byzantines constructed a moat and three walls that were 25 feet thick. As indicated in the sketch ... invaders were faced first with the moat some 60 feet wide and 22 feet deep that was normally dry but could be flooded by pipes. Behind the moat was a low wall to shield a line of archers. Even if the attackers could overcome this first defense, they were confronted by a second wall, 27 feet high, which sheltered more troops. Beyond the second wall lay

the third and strongest bulwark. Its towers, some 70 feet high, housed more archers and missile throwers. Only the force of gunpowder finally demolished the protecting walls, bringing Constantinople down.



CV

Note: During the 1,100-year history of the Byzantine Empire, 24 efforts were made to capture the city of Constantinople. Only two were successful. The Crusaders entered the city in 1204 but were eventually thrown out a few decades later. The Turkish invasion in 1453 marked the end of the Byzantine Empire.

Document C: Eastern Orthodox Christianity

Content Notes:

- There are a few key distinctions between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox forms of Christianity. Eastern Orthodox Christianity does not recognize the authority of the Pope, allows its clergy to marry, and applies different calendar calculations to determine religious holidays, including Christmas and Easter.
- In 860 CE, the Rus people of present-day Ukraine and western Russia requested that a missionary be sent to their land to tell them about Orthodox Christianity. At the time, the leader of the Rus, Prince Vladimir of Kiev, wanted his people to adopt a monotheistic religion. He was considering Judaism, Islam, Roman Catholicism, and Orthodox Christianity. The Byzantine Empire sent a bishop to meet with Vladimir, who ultimately decided to convert to Orthodox Christianity and made it the official religion of his realm. This decision had a major impact on the history of Russia.
- The Slavs lived in the region that is presently occupied by Eastern European nations and Russia. This group began to convert to Christianity in the mid-800s. The Slavs who lived close to Western Europe converted to Latin Christianity, which later became the Roman Catholic Church. Slavs who lived closer to the Byzantine Empire converted to Orthodox Christianity.
- Although many people in Eastern Europe and Russia converted to Orthodox Christianity, the Byzantines were not zealous missionaries. Indeed, the Orthodox church on the whole took the attitude that people interested in converting to Christianity should come to Constantinople.
- During the 800s, a Byzantine missionary named Cyril realized that the Slavs did not have a written language. To enable this group to read the Bible, he invented the Cyrillic alphabet. The Cyrillic alphabet is still used in parts of Eastern Europe and Russia.
- Eastern Orthodox people make up about 12% of the world's Christian population and about 3.5% of the world's total population.

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
 1. Why did the Eastern Orthodox Church separate from the western Roman Catholic Church?

There were three issues: interpretation of some fine points of the Bible, the marrying of priests, and the refusal by the Byzantine Church to accept the authority of the Pope.
 2. Which country listed on the chart has the world's highest Eastern Orthodox population?

Russia
 3. Which country listed on the chart has the highest percentage of Eastern Orthodox Christians?

Greece
 4. Would it be accurate to say that the Patriarch of Constantinople (who used to be the Patriarch of the entire Byzantine Empire) has great power over Russia, Ukraine, and Ethiopia today?

It would not be accurate. The note in the document says that the position of the Patriarch of Constantinople is ceremonial and that the Orthodox Church branches in Russia, Ukraine, and Ethiopia are very independent.
 5. How can you use this document to argue why it is important to study Byzantine history?

The chart suggests that there are 250 million Eastern Orthodox Christians living in the world who have been influenced by Byzantine church traditions. If Americans want to understand these people, do business with them, solve international problems with them, and welcome them should they migrate to America, we must learn something of their history.

Document C

Source: Chart compiled from *The World Fact Book*, 2011.

Document Note: In the centuries that followed Emperor Constantine's move to Byzantium, the Christian Church of Rome and the Christian Church of Constantinople gradually grew apart. The final split occurred in 1054, a separation that continues to this day. The reason for the split had to do with some spiritual interpretations of the Bible, whether or not a priest could get married (the Byzantine Church said "yes"), and the refusal by Constantinople to accept the supreme authority of the Pope. Today the Eastern Orthodox Church has a ceremonial leader, the Bishop of Constantinople, also known as the Patriarch, and a number of very independent branches - Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, and Ukrainian Orthodox.

CV

Eastern Orthodox Christianity Around the World

| Nation | World Rank in Orthodox Population | Eastern Orthodox Population * | Percentage of Nation's Population that is Eastern Orthodox |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Russia | 1 | 106,445,473 | 75 % |
| Ukraine | 2 | 34,862,521 | 76 % |
| Ethiopia | 3 | 34,461,135 | 44 % |
| Romania | 4 | 18,726,322 | 88 % |
| Greece | 5 | 11,080,059 | 98 % |
| United States | 11 | 5,269,864 | 2% |

* As of 2010, there were about 250,000,000 Eastern Orthodox in the world. This compares with a total Christian population of about 2 billion.

Document D: Justinian's Code

Content Notes:

- The Byzantine Emperor Justinian I differed from many other emperors. Born to peasant parents in the Balkan countryside, Justinian nonetheless had an uncle, Justin, who was leader of the palace guards in Constantinople. Justin brought Justinian to Constantinople, where the boy attended school and served in the military. When the reigning emperor died, Justin gained the throne and asked Justinian to co-rule with him. Following his uncle's death, Justinian became sole emperor. Justinian never forgot his roots. He allowed common people to approach and converse with him, a practice that most other emperors did not follow.
- Justinian I married Theodora, a former actress. Her father was a bear trainer for the Hippodrome, the public arena in Constantinople. At the time, most Byzantines considered the acting profession to be disgraceful, so the marriage scandalized many people, especially nobles. However, Justinian valued Theodora's intelligence and good judgment and often consulted with her on political matters.
- A good portion of the Code spelled out what a good Catholic Christian should believe. Heretics like the Nestorians, who did not accept the idea of the Holy Trinity (the oneness of God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit), were declared unlawful. They spoke untruths that were "disturbing to the minds of simple people." Freedom of religion was not one of the hallmarks of Justinian's Code.
- When Justinian had the laws reorganized, he made the law more favorable toward women. Perhaps his wife, Theodora, influenced him in this regard. The punishment for rape was made more severe. Also, a woman caught in adultery was no longer killed. In addition, Justinian revised the law so that it protected a wife's right to her dowry if her husband left her.
- The scholar Aikaterina Christophilopoulou has written: "Justinian's monumental work of codifying the laws . . . formed the foundation of later European codes." Indeed, parts of Justinian law can still be found in the legal codes of some European nations today.

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
 1. Why did Justinian create a new legal code for the Byzantine Empire?

The laws of the old Roman Empire were in bad shape. They were out of date and sometimes contradicted each other.
 2. According to *The Institutes*, what are the three main guidelines one should follow when writing laws?

To live honestly, to hurt no one, to give everyone his due
 3. What is the meaning of "to everyone his due"?

To give everyone the justice to which he is entitled by law
 4. What evidence is there that the English philosopher John Locke might have borrowed some ideas from Justinian's Code?

Locke echoes the Code when he says that the state of nature teaches us to protect individuals from hurt or harm. The Code says this same protection should be one of the three guidelines for writing just laws.
 5. According to the Declaration of Independence, what are three unalienable rights that people have? Are any of these rights similar to ideas in the Code? Explain.

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The right to life is similar to hurting no one. The pursuit of happiness is only possible if society is just and everyone receives his due.
 6. How can you use this document to argue why it is important to study the Byzantines?

The document suggests that the Justinian Code may have influenced legal thinking in later centuries. Without the Code, the very ideas of justice – of doing people no harm, of every one receiving fair treatment under the law – might not have developed as quickly, or perhaps at all. Justinian advanced the idea that a just and clear set of laws was necessary to a good and stable society. John Locke and Thomas Jefferson echoed those ideas more than one thousand years later.

Document D

Document Note: Justinian I ruled the Byzantine Empire from 527 to 565 CE. When he became emperor, the laws of the crumbled Roman Empire in the West were very disorganized and sometimes contradicted each other. Lawyers often took advantage of this confusion by using long-forgotten laws to support their cases. Justinian knew that a clear and fair legal code was necessary to a unified empire. He therefore appointed a commission of ten experts who created a new code of 4,652 laws. These laws were written (by hand, of course) in 50 books which were further simplified into a single text called *The Institutes*. Together, these writings are called Justinian's Code. The Code dealt with everything from property rights to punishments for religious heresy (crimes). Historians credit Justinian's Code with shaping our basic ideas about law and justice today.

CV

Source: *The Institutes of Justinian's Code*, 531 CE.

Justice is the constant and perpetual [continuous] wish to render every one his due ...The maxims [main guidelines] of law are these: to live honestly, to hurt no one, to every one his due.

Source: *The Second Treatise of Civil Government*, John Locke, 1690.

Note: John Locke was an influential English political philosopher.

The state of nature...teaches all man kind, who will but consult it, that being equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.

Source: The Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson, 1776.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.

Document E: Preserving the Greek Classics

Content Notes:

- In the Byzantine Empire, business people often hired scribes to record ancient Greek manuscripts and then sold the copies. Copies of these works tended to be very expensive. For example, Plato's works could sell for about 21 gold pieces. In today's money, this would be about \$7,500. Only the wealthy could afford such prices.
- During the early 800s, people began to copy manuscripts by using the minuscule script. This type of cursive script used lowercase letters as opposed to the traditional majuscule, which consisted of all unconnected, capital letters. The use of minuscule greatly speeded up the process of copying text.
- Many original ancient Greek manuscripts were lost when troops on the Fourth Crusade captured and ransacked Constantinople. The historian David Nicholas states: "The crusaders burned the entire city [Constantinople], including the imperial library and its irreplaceable manuscripts." However, many of the copies of these Greek manuscripts survived.
- During the 1300s, when the Turks conquered parts of Byzantium, many Byzantine scholars fled to Italy and brought their copies of Greek classics with them. Scholars in Italy thought that these works had been lost. Excited by their discovery, the scholars searched for Latin copies of ancient Roman manuscripts in various monasteries and found many. The ideas found in these ancient Greek and Roman texts inspired scholars and artists, who used them to begin the Renaissance.

Teaching Tips:

- Discuss the Document Analysis questions:
 1. How were the Byzantines able to preserve Greek classics?

Many people who never became well known recopied these classics with their own hands using very small script.
 2. What Greek thinkers influenced science and mathematics?

Aristotle, Euclid, Hippocrates
 3. What Greek thinkers influenced literature?

Homer, Sophocles, Aristotle
 4. Which Greek cultural figure is most likely imitated by a classroom teacher?

Socrates
 5. How can you use this document to argue why it is important to study Byzantine history?

It shows that Byzantine scribes preserved many of the classical books of ancient Greek literature. This included work by Homer, Plato, Aristotle, and Euclid. Without this literature, the history, mathematics, science and philosophy of the West would have been very different.

Document E

Source: Cyril Mango, "The Revival of Learning," *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, Oxford University Press, 2002.

The most important achievement of the Byzantine revival lay ... in the preservation of a sizable portion of the ancient Greek classics.... From the point of view of Western culture it may even be said that this act of salvage constitutes our greatest debt to Byzantium ... all the [saved classic] literature ... survived because men in the ninth and tenth centuries ... recopied [it] at the time in minuscule script,*... It is remarkable how much has survived.

CV

*A cursive script that made hand-copying much faster

Ancient Greek literature preserved by Byzantine scribes

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Homer | The <i>Iliad</i> and the <i>Odyssey</i> are among most widely read poems in American and European schools and colleges today. |
| Sophocles | Theatrical plays, including <i>Oedipus Rex</i> , helped to define a form of literature called tragedy. |
| Socrates | Known to us through the writings of Plato and others, Socrates crafted a form of inquiry and debate, called the Socratic Method, that is used in classrooms today. It features questions rather than answers. |
| Plato | One of Plato's works, <i>The Republic</i> , describes an ideal society and explores the importance of justice in that society. |
| Aristotle | His many scientific and philosophical writings advanced the use of logic and scientific thought. |
| Euclid | He made inquiries into astronomy, music, and mathematics. Regarded as the father of geometry. |
| Hippocrates | His medical works and his ethical standards led to the still-used Hippocratic Oath taken by all doctors. |

