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# i Think: World History

## Middle Ages Asia



by Sharon Coletti  
and Kendra Corr

\*\* It is the goal of InspirEd Educators to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

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## This Land Is Our Land

### Springboard:

Students should study the map and read “The Byzantine Empire” and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to describe several important contributions of the Byzantine Empire.

**Materials:** The Byzantine Empire (Springboard handout)  
The Official History of Emperor Justinian (handout)  
The Secret History of Emperor Justinian (handout)  
Extract the Facts (handout)

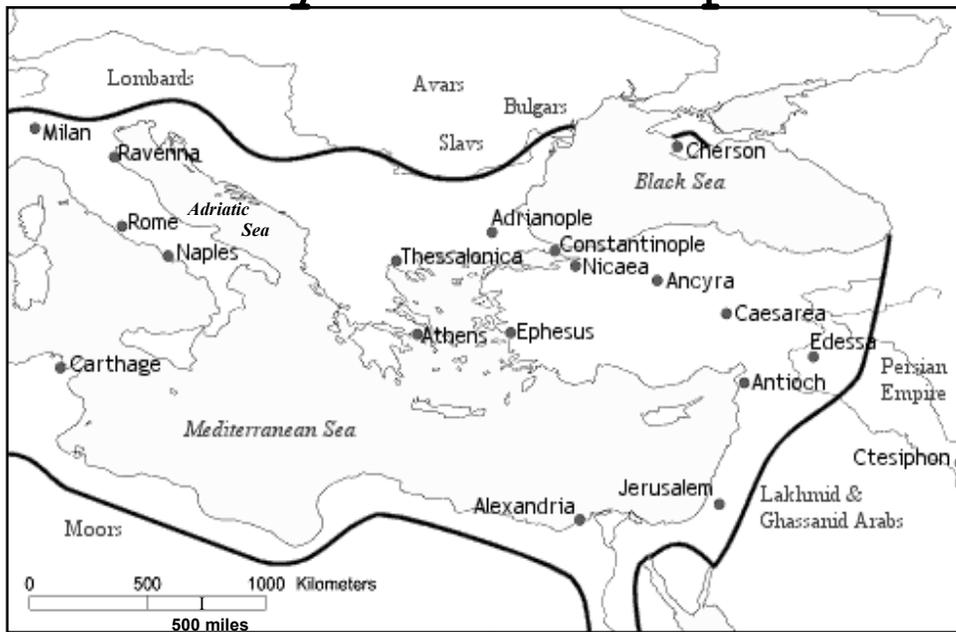
**Terms to know:** **posterity** - future generations  
**Balkans** - peninsula in southeastern Europe between the Adriatic and Black Seas (*see Springboard map*)  
**heretic** - one whose views are seen as conflicting with religious teachings  
**successor** - one who follows next in order, as a ruler

### Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that the Emperor Justinian is considered by most historians to be the most important ruler in the history of the Byzantine Empire which lasted from 330 until the mid 1400's, about 1,000 years longer than the Western Roman Empire. Go on to explain that much of what is known of Justinian's rule is from the writings of his official historian.
- Distribute copies of the “The Official History of Emperor Justinian,” “The Secret History of Emperor Justinian,” and the “Extract the Facts” handouts. Explain that Procopius was a Byzantine historian during Justinian rule. The problem with studying Procopius's writings is that he actually recorded two versions of Justinian's rule: the official story and a secret tale, so modern historians are forced to analyze both (along with other sources) to determine the facts.
- The student(s) should work individually, in pairs, or small groups to read both versions and complete the “Extract the Facts” handout as instructed. (FYI: Both essays are InspirEd creations; Procopius actually wrote several books reflecting the two views of Justinian's life and reign.)
- Have the student(s) share their answers and discuss. During the discussion have the student(s) identify comments in the readings that “slanted” the facts toward one viewpoint or the other.
- **EXTENSION:** Have the student(s) search online to find additional information or pictures of people, places, and things (Theodora, Hagia Sophia, the Orthodox Church, etc.) mentioned in the readings.



# The Byzantine Empire



In 330 CE, the Emperor Constantine moved his capital city from Rome to Byzantium, which he renamed Constantinople, in the eastern part of his empire. Although the Western Roman Empire was overrun by Germanic tribes and its capital was sacked in 476, the eastern portion that came to be called the Byzantine Empire after the old city continued and thrived for nearly 1,000 years more.

After Rome's fall the Byzantine emperors hoped to one day recapture their lost city. In fact the Emperor Justinian, who greatly expanded the empire during his reign, succeeded in reclaiming Rome and Italy for a time. However the war with the Ostrogoths drained Justinian's **coffers** so that only three years after his death in 565, Italy fell to another Germanic tribe, the Lombards.

The Byzantine Empire experienced its ups and downs over the centuries until its final defeat by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Still despite wars and other crises, the empire developed a unique and beautiful culture that still impacts the world today.

According to the passage, \_\_\_ ruled \_\_\_ at the height of its power.

- A. Constantine ... Rome
- B. Justinian ... the Byzantine Empire
- C. the Ostrogoths ... Italy
- D. the Lombards ... the Roman Empire

Which word is a synonym for "coffers" in the second paragraph?

- A. glasses
- B. reservoir
- C. emotions
- D. treasury

Which people were **MOST LIKELY** responsible for sacking Rome in 476?

- A. Germans
- B. Byzantines
- C. Ostrogoths
- D. Lombards

The approximate distance the Germanic tribe traveled from their lands to capture Rome in 568 CE was

- A. 200 km.
- B. 450 km.
- C. 750 km.
- D. 1000 km.

# The Byzantine Empire-Answers & Explanations



At its height in 565 CE

In 330 CE, the Emperor Constantine moved his capital city from Rome to Byzantium, which he renamed Constantinople, in the eastern part of his empire. Although the Western Roman Empire was overrun by Germanic tribes and its capital was sacked in 476, the eastern portion that came to be called the Byzantine Empire after the old city continued and thrived for nearly 1,000 years more.

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The Byzantine Empire experienced its ups and downs over the centuries until its final defeat by the Ottoman Turks in 1453. Still despite wars and other crises, the empire developed a unique and beautiful culture that still impacts the world today.

According to the passage, \_\_\_ ruled \_\_\_ at the height of its power.

- A. Constantine ... Rome
  - B. Justinian ... the Byzantine Empire \*
  - C. the Ostrogoths ... Italy
  - D. the Lombards ... the Roman Empire
- (Justinian ruled until his death in 565, and the map's caption indicates that 565 CE was the empire's height.)*

Which word is a synonym for "coffers" in the second paragraph?

- A. glasses
  - B. reservoir
  - C. emotions
  - D. treasury \*
- (Even if students are unfamiliar with some terms, they should figure out that "treasury" has to do with money based on its root.)*

Which people were **MOST LIKELY** responsible for sacking Rome in 476?

- A. Germans
  - B. Byzantines
  - C. Ostrogoths \*
  - D. Lombards
- (Rome was sacked in 476, shortly before Justinian reclaimed it.)*

The approximate distance the Germanic tribe traveled from their lands to capture Rome in 568 CE was

- A. 200 km.
  - B. 450 km. \*
  - C. 750 km.
  - D. 1000 km.
- (Students should measure from the line dividing Lombard and Byzantine land.)*

# THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF EMPEROR JUSTINIAN

An Essay by PROCOPIUS



I, Procopius, have been asked by the Emperor Justinian to compile for posterity a history of His Grace's accomplishments. The point at which to begin, as it should be, is with the august ruler's rise to power.

Flavius Julianus Justinianus was nephew to the last Roman emperor, Justin, and advanced to consul of the Eastern Empire during his uncle's reign. Upon Justin's death in April of 527 the year of our Lord, Justinian received the crown. From the outset the emperor set as a goal the recovery of Roman lands which had been lost to conquerors. This he achieved with the expansion of eastern lands across North Africa and southern Europe.

In 533 a fleet of five hundred ships set sail for Africa and in but two major battles re-established Roman rule along the North African coast and southward up the Nile River. Victories at the Mediterranean island of Sicily, in Dalmatia on the Adriatic Sea, in Naples, Rome, and elsewhere secured control of Italy and the Balkans. The emperor's armies also gained much of southern Spain and even seized land from Persia to the east.

Ruling with the help of his lovely wife, the Empress Theodora whom he married two years before taking the throne, Justinian achieved far more than military triumphs. Byzantine government, laws, literature, art, architecture, and religion all reflect the hand of Emperor Justinian's capable rule.

Governmentally the emperor strengthened a land divided by disagreements among people and groups within. In doing so his most important contribution has been the Justinian Code in which he organized the laws and decrees of past emperors, adding many of his own. This orderly and complete set of laws insures that every Roman citizen can easily understand the laws that govern the empire. In fact the emperor devised a manual for students which no doubt will serve as a model for legal study in other lands and times.

This ruler has also encouraged the arts and architecture. While he considers the empire thoroughly Roman and speaks mainly Latin himself, Justinian also holds great love and appreciation for all that is Greek, including the language which has become widely spoken. During his reign Byzantine writers have produced many works in the Greek style but influenced by Christianity, which is so important to all. Many artists have created magnificent mosaics which, I am certain, will have a lasting influence on artistic styles here and abroad. Still his interest in architecture has overshadowed other art forms as the emperor has seen to the building of aqueducts, bridges, and many magnificent buildings including twenty-five churches. Hagia Sophia, the great domed church in Constantinople called a "wonder of the world," is truly a masterpiece and a credit to the emperor.

It is in his love for Christ and the Church where Justinian's greatest impact is felt. As leader of both the empire and the Orthodox Church, the eastern branch of the Roman Catholic Church from which it is separated, Justinian has worked to rid his church and land of heretics. By preventing Jews and non-Christians from living in Constantinople and by barring them from holding public offices and teaching positions, the emperor has strengthened the Church and kept its practice pure.

# THE SECRET HISTORY OF EMPEROR JUSTINIAN

An Essay by PROCOPIUS



I, Procopius, have been asked by the Emperor Justinian, to compile for posterity a history of his rule. Though I have agreed to the task, I feel the need to record my own true feelings about this devil of an emperor as well. To that end I have decided to compose a parallel “secret” history of Justinian’s life and reign to be made public at a time after his death. Yet this history must begin prior to this foolish ruler’s rise to power.

Even before taking the throne, Flavius Julianus Justinianus was known for having poor judgment. Though of a powerful and respected family, the young Justinian befriended the daughter of a circus bear trainer, an actress with a reputation for giving and attending wild parties. Against the wishes of his uncle, the Emperor Justin, and against the laws of the Eastern Roman Empire itself, Justinian wed Theodora and made her empress to rule at his side when he was crowned after his uncle’s death.

Despite her lowly background Theodora actually proved more able than her useless husband in handling matters of state. In January of 532 the year of our Lord, during a chariot race in the Hippodrome in Constantinople, two rival religious groups started a riot. They set afire a number of buildings in the area and even crowned a new emperor. By all accounts Justinian, the coward, wanted to flee, but Theodora spoke with great courage to her husband and his advisors, convincing them to defend their positions. The emperor then put down this Nika Revolt by ordering in troops who killed more than 30,000 people. Though it was necessary for the government to crush the rebellion, I cannot but think the action could have been accomplished with far less bloodshed.

Yet shedding blood has been Justinian’s way throughout his reign, both in defending Orthodox Christianity and in expanding the empire. A fierce believer in the Word of God in the Holy Bible and a lover of the traditions and rituals of the Orthodox Church, the emperor has worked to strengthen and spread the faith. Yet to do this he has persecuted people who hold differing beliefs. Were it not for the fact that his wife belonged to a rival Christian sect, I suspect that all persons disagreeing with this wicked emperor might have been killed rather than the many thousands who actually were.

Now I must address the emperor’s wars. While in fact he succeeded in gaining land for the empire, he did so at much too high a cost. The expense of the wars and Justinian’s tremendous building projects has left the empire’s treasury bare, such that his successor will have little with which to proceed forward. The Germanic tribes in Europe and our enemies elsewhere hold a strong desire for revenge against the Eastern Romans for the conquests. It is my belief that without proper funds it will be impossible for the Byzantine armies to maintain control of the empire that Justinian has built.

Looking further to the future, it seems quite likely that the lasting effects of Justinian’s wars will in fact prove harmful to the very lands he sought to “save” from the Germanics. Badly damaged by the many wars fought there, the Western people have suffered terribly and their lands have yet to be fully repaired to a state of normal living. I fear there is little hope for the people there to find comfort or peace in the coming years.



# EXTRACT the FACTS

**DIRECTIONS:** Analyze the two slanted versions of the history of Emperor Justinian to identify facts about the ruler's life and his reign.

|                    | + Positive + | - Negative - |
|--------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Military Feats     |              |              |
| Law and Government |              |              |
| Art                |              |              |
| Architecture       |              |              |
| Literature         |              |              |
| Religion           |              |              |



# EXTRACT the FACTS - Answers & Explanations

|                           | + Positive +  | - Negative -  |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Military Feats</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 533 CE, fleet of five hundred ships fought in North Africa; re-establish control there.</li> <li>• Victories in Italy, the Balkans, Spain, and Persia; Byzantine control in southern Europe and some territory to the east.</li> </ul>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wars to expand the Eastern Roman Empire very costly.</li> <li>• Weakened empire due to inability to afford to defend lands.</li> <li>• Also weakened Western lands in Europe (destroyed land, buildings, roads, etc.); left open to invasions.</li> </ul>        |
| <b>Law and Government</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened empire by settling internal disputes (mainly among rival religious groups).</li> <li>• Compiled Justinian Code to inform citizens of empire laws.</li> <li>• Devised manual for law students; <u>a model for European legal study.</u></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settled disputes mainly by restricting rights or killing non-Christians and non-Orthodox Christians.</li> <li>• Would have given up crown during Nika Revolt of 532, but wife and co-ruler Theodora convinced otherwise.</li> </ul>                              |
| <b>Art</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encouraged the arts.</li> <li>• Byzantine style, <u>characterized by colorful mosaics and long, thin figures, influenced artistic styles in Medieval Europe and in the Muslim Empire.</u></li> </ul>   |   |
| <b>Architecture</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built aqueducts, bridges, and many buildings; numerous churches.</li> <li>• Hagia Sophia, huge domed church in Constantinople, most famous. <u>Today a museum in Istanbul, Turkey, the former Constantinople.</u></li> </ul>                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spent large sums on building projects; contributed to financial weakness of empire.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Literature</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greek language, literature, philosophy, etc. popularized.</li> <li>• Period writings reflected Greek styling with Christian themes.</li> <li>• <u>Interest in Classical Greece helped preserve ideas and styles.</u></li> </ul>                                |   |
| <b>Religion</b>           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened and spread Eastern Orthodox religion by restricting other faiths in empire.</li> <li>• <u>Spared Theodora's Christian sect (Monophysitism: believed Jesus of Nazareth to be wholly God and not part man) from persecution.</u></li> </ul>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orthodox religion gained prominence by persecution of people of other faiths and Christian ideas.</li> <li>• <u>Christians of the time disagreed and even fought over specific details of the faith and/or how it should be practiced (see left).</u></li> </ul> |

Underline text offers supplemental information.

## A Prophet Is Born



### Springboard:

Students should read “Arabian Idols” and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to describe the life of Muhammad and the circumstances surrounding the founding of Islam.

**Materials:** Arabian Idols (Springboard handout)  
The Prophet Muhammad: His Life’s Path (2 handouts)  
Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam (handout)

**Terms to know:** **pagans** - people who worship idols, nature, symbols, or other non-traditional deities  
**Islam** - religion founded by Muhammad  
**Allah** - the God of Islam  
**convert** - one who undergoes a change, particularly from one religion to another  
**Muslim** - follower of Islam  
**Qur’an** - the holy book of Islam

### Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that it was into this setting of 6<sup>th</sup> century Makkah that one of the world’s most influential people was born.
- Distribute copies of “The Prophet Muhammad: His Life’s Path.” The student(s) should work individually or in groups to read the four narratives, highlighting important passages and details.
- Distribute “Muhammad: The Prophet of Islam” and explain that the student(s) will use the information they have learned to complete a sort of resume, a summary of a person’s background and accomplishments, for Muhammad (which would normally be submitted with a job application).
- Have the student(s) share their ideas and discuss. (Answers may vary but should include information from the narratives.)
- During the discussion note that Muhammad’s background greatly influenced the beliefs and practices of Islam and have the student(s) give examples. (His early worship in the Kaaba led Muhammad to later declare it the holiest shrine of Islam. His own kindness and honesty became requirements for Muslim behavior: the care of widows, orphans, the poor, the sick, and the aged to be required. His speeches and stories of his deeds have been recorded in the Qur’an, Islam’s holy book. The Muslim calendar marks time by the Hegira when he fled his enemies in Makkah for Madinah. Muhammad’s government in Madinah served as a model for ones with laws based on Islam. The practice of allowing multiple wives was supported by Muhammad’s example. Makkah is the holy city of Islam because it is the home of the Kaaba and was Muhammad’s birthplace.)



Makkah (or Mecca), a city located in what is now central Saudi Arabia, was a major trading center in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. About 45 miles inland from the Red Sea port of Jidda, Makkah was established as a desert oasis stop on the old caravan trade route linking the Mediterranean world with southern Arabia, East Africa, and Asia. Over time more and more merchants came through Makkah and trade grew to become the lifeblood of the town.

The people in Makkah and the surrounding area at that time are now seen as lawless pagans who worshipped idols and cared little for their fellow human beings. There was no real government so crimes, rather than being punished in an orderly way by judges and courts, were usually avenged by family members of victims. Most Arabians then belonged to and were loyal to a tribe, settled or nomadic. Each tribe was responsible for protecting all in the group, often from other warring tribes.

With only tribal members to protect them, the people of Arabia often looked to **deities** for help. The gods the Arabians worshipped at that time were idols, the most famous of which was the Black Stone. A building called the Kaaba was built in Makkah to house the Black Stone along with 360 additional idols sacred to one or more of the area's tribes. The location of the Kaaba in Makkah helped the city grow in importance and wealth as pilgrims from all around Arabia traveled to the city to worship the idols there.

What conclusion could be drawn about Makkah based on information in the passage?

- A. The city is surrounded by desert land.
- B. Makkah was the richest city in Arabia.
- C. One tribe was more powerful than others.
- D. Makkah was the “crime capital” of Arabia.

In 6<sup>th</sup> century Makkah \_\_\_ were more important than \_\_\_.

- A. idols ... worship
- B. cities ... religions
- C. products ... people
- D. tribes ... government

Makkah's wealth was **MOST** affected by

- A. caravans.
- B. temples.
- C. crimes.
- D. tribes.

Which word provides the **BEST** context clue to the meaning of “deities” in the last paragraph?

- A. protect
- B. help
- C. gods
- D. idols

Based on information in the passage, the Kaaba could **BEST** be described as

- A. an idol.
- B. a temple.
- C. an oasis.
- D. a market.