Byzantine Legacies

Trace how an empire shaped law, faith, and culture.

SS24.8.2 "Describe the Byzantine Empire, its institutions, and its legacy. 2a Identify factors leading to the separation of Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Christianity and explain how the Orthodox Church influenced society and culture in Eastern..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle two causes of the church division, underline two examples of Byzantine influence beyond the empire, and number the three stages linking Justinian's law collection to modern civil law codes.

Beyond Constantinople

1. In Constantinople, the Byzantine capital, a merchant might carry silk past an imperial court and into a crowded market. After the western Roman Empire fell, the eastern empire kept a Roman-style government led by an emperor. Officials collected taxes, and courts settled disputes. In the 500s, Emperor Justinian ordered scholars to gather and organize centuries of Roman laws into the Code of Justinian. Its rules covered property, contracts, and family matters. Later legal scholars studied this collection, which helped shape civil law codes used in many countries today.

2. A traveler entering a church in Constantinople heard prayers in Greek; in Rome, worship was usually in Latin. Church leaders also disagreed about authority: the pope in Rome claimed leadership over all Christians, while eastern leaders resisted that claim. Disputes over practices, including the use of unleavened bread in communion, added tension. In 1054, church leaders in Rome and Constantinople exchanged excommunications. The divide grew over centuries, forming the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. In the east, emperors supported the Orthodox Church, while bishops guided worship and community life.

3. Gold-colored mosaics and painted icons filled Byzantine churches with religious images. Constantinople's Hagia Sophia used a vast dome to create a soaring interior; later Orthodox churches borrowed domes and images. Byzantine missionaries brought Orthodox teachings to Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe. Their students helped develop the Cyrillic alphabet, which helped spread religious writing in Slavic languages. Centuries after Byzantium ended, Russian Orthodox communities carried this tradition into parts of Central Asia, building churches and organizing community life. These examples show how Byzantine culture traveled far beyond the empire's borders.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Justinian's work with Roman law affect legal codes used today? Trace the steps in between.

2. Explain two factors that pushed eastern and western Christians apart.

3. How did Orthodox Christianity influence people in Eastern Europe and, later, parts of Central Asia?

4. Why can Byzantine church art and architecture be considered a lasting cultural contribution? Use two details from the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A museum is choosing one Byzantine legacy for an exhibit about life beyond the empire. Write five sentences recommending one legacy, explaining where it began, describing two effects in different parts of life, and comparing its reach with a second legacy from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Byzantine Legacies

GRADE 8 · SS24.8.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle two causes of the church division, underline two examples of Byzantine influence beyond the empire, and number the three stages linking Justinian's law collection to modern civil law codes. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Justinian's work with Roman law affect legal codes used today? Trace the steps in between.	**Justinian had scholars organize Roman laws into a collection. Later scholars studied it, and it helped shape modern civil law codes.**
2	Explain two factors that pushed eastern and western Christians apart.	**Eastern leaders resisted the pope's claim to lead all Christians, and the churches disagreed over practices such as using unleavened bread in communion. Greek and Latin worship also marked a difference.**
3	How did Orthodox Christianity influence people in Eastern Europe and, later, parts of Central Asia?	**In Eastern Europe, Byzantine missionaries spread Orthodox teachings, and their students helped develop Cyrillic for religious writing. Later, Russian Orthodox communities built churches and organized community life in parts of Central Asia.**
4	Why can Byzantine church art and architecture be considered a lasting cultural contribution? Use two details from the passage.	**Byzantine churches used mosaics and icons for religious images and Hagia Sophia featured a vast dome. Later Orthodox churches borrowed domes and images.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I recommend an exhibit on the Orthodox Church's legacy. Byzantine missionaries carried its teachings to Slavic peoples in Eastern Europe. Their students helped develop Cyrillic, which spread religious writing in Slavic languages. Much later, Russian Orthodox communities brought this tradition to parts of Central Asia, where churches organized community life. Justinian's Code shaped civil law codes in many countries, but Orthodox tradition also shaped worship and writing across regions.

Accept other passage-supported causes of the church division and other accurate comparisons of legacies. For the museum recommendation, look for five sentences with two distinct effects and a comparison grounded in the passage.